



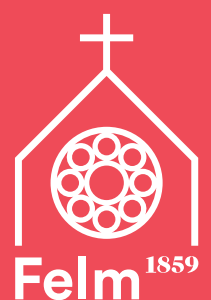
# MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION AMONG LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

**Review of Finland's Development Cooperation  
and UPR Recommendations**

**2006–2016**

**Indira Helsinki 2017**

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As a result of iBCDE programme mother tongue based education was introduced in public primary schools in Northeastern Cambodia.

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# ACRONYMS

ACALAN	African Academy of Languages
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRE	Culturally Relevant Education
CRPD	Rights of People with Disabilities
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yasuse
ECSR	Ethnic Community School Readiness Pilot project
EFA	Education for All
EIBAMAZ	Intercultural Bilingual Education in the Andean Region
EU	European Union
FAD	Finnish Association of the Deaf
FASE	Education Sector Support Fund
FCG	Finnish Consulting Group
iBCDE	Identity-Based Community Development and Education
ICC	International Cooperation Cambodia
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International non-governmental organization
KAD	Kosovar Association of the Deaf
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
MLE	Multilingual Education
MoEYS	Cambodia's Ministry of Education Youth & Sport
MT	Mother Tongue
MTB MLE	Mother tongue-based multilingual education
NELHOS	Nepal Lhomi Society

NFE	Non-formal education
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
SWAp	Sector-Wide Approach Programme
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UMN	United Mission of Nepal
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WRK	Finnish Wycliffe Bible Translators

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review was commissioned by Felm to provide an overview of the development cooperation and other funding instruments allocated by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) to mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE) among linguistic minorities from 2006 to 2016. The review also covers political dialogue and advocacy to promote the rights of linguistic minorities in multilateral and bilateral fora. To this end, the review aims to inform the planning of advocacy work related to the rights of linguistic minorities, as well as promote networking and the sharing of information among different organizations working in this field.

The scope of the review includes all aspects of the MFA's work, comprising bilateral, regional and multilateral development cooperation and Finnish non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) development cooperation projects on MTB MLE among linguistic minorities. One programme is also presented as a case study in greater detail. The review is confined to linguistic minorities, including sign language users. In addition, it adopts a linguistic approach to the issue, in which Deaf people are seen as a language minority rather than as people with disabilities. The term linguistic minorities may be problematic but this review defines it as people whose languages are not nationally reinforced in the country or area where they live, and who are lacking political power and rights to use their language in public, such as in educational institutions. Many of these people are also indigenous peoples and ethno-linguistic minorities who, in addition to their own distinct language, have their own culture and traditions that stand out from those of the majority of the population.

Despite the fact that an increasingly high number of children all over the world have the possibility to go to school, many children are low achievers and have to repeat one or more grades, which ultimately leads to them dropping out and to total exclusion from the education system. One of the most fundamental reasons for this is the language of instruction, which is not familiar to all students. Hence, millions of children are forced to study in a language that they can neither understand nor speak. Language plays a crucial role in whether children succeed in school or not, and multiple studies have shown that children learn best through their mother tongue. Indeed, studies have proved that when children can learn in their mother tongue, it dramatically improves their competence at school, they become more active in class, and they progress to further grades.

MTB MLE has been compared to a bridge that safely leads children to learn other national languages and international languages alike. It is very important for linguistic minorities to learn other languages in order to communicate with the broader community, to gain access to public services, and to enhance their opportunities for further study and employment. In essence, the learner's mother tongue forms a firm foundation for all learning. Being able to use one's mother tongue in education also has a huge impact on linguistic minorities'

identity and status in society; it is not only a question of language, it also has a bearing on their right to preserve their culture and way of life.

The language policies on formal education differ widely in different countries. Many developing countries' language policies and education systems have preferred to use official and national languages, which are often ex-colonial languages such as English, French, Spanish or Portuguese. They can also be local languages such as Nepali in Nepal or Khmer in Cambodia, which are spoken by the majority of the population. These languages are unfamiliar to linguistic minorities, however, who generally live in rural areas. Fortunately, there is a growing trend around the world to support MTB MLE. In Southeast Asia, for example, a rising number of educational programmes have utilized this approach, as well as in Africa, where awareness is showing signs of growth and government officials are demonstrating more interest in using multilingualism in educational curriculums. Strong evidence of the benefits and proven cost-effectiveness of multilingual education has had an impact on government officials in many countries, such as Mozambique and Cambodia, which have recently reformed their educational systems towards multilingual education.

As a relatively small country, Finland has actively supported MTB MLE programmes among linguistic minorities in many countries through and with different partners, achieving considerable results through joint funding. The programmes have had a positive effect on the educational policies and legislation in the target countries, and have formed the basis for ongoing change. Moreover, these actions have succeeded in changing the attitudes of government officials, teachers and parents towards linguistic minorities, including Deaf children and their needs as a linguistic minority.

At the advocacy level, the MFA has participated in the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) processes, where Finland has made recommendations to the effect that countries such as Nepal, Mozambique and Botswana should allow linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples to use their mother tongue in education. Finland has also made recommendations to many countries concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, children's rights and the right to education, in which language rights may also be included. As the UPR process is one of the most powerful mechanisms for enhancing the human rights situation in different countries, Finland could place more emphasis on linguistic rights through this process.

The focus of this review is on linguistic minorities, but Finland's support for MTB MLE is often part of larger entities, such as educational sector programmes that do not necessarily specify linguistic minorities such as the Deaf or minority language speakers. When speaking of MTB MLE in general, it is recommended that every child who could benefit from learning in his/her mother tongue should have access to MTB MLE – whatever the status of the language. Finland has supported MTB MLE in general in local languages (national and major languages) in a number of countries, such as Ethiopia, and the inclusive education sector in general, for example in Kosovo. Unfortunately, an overview of all of the various programmes that have embraced MTB MLE is beyond the scope of this review. However, they nonetheless indicate the important role played by Finland in promoting MTB MLE in its development cooperation.



The review also reveals that MTB MLE among linguistic minorities is often conducted by INGOs and NGOs. Finnish NGOs have played a remarkable role in supporting MTB MLE programmes among linguistic minorities in particular, where they have been instrumental in implementing linguistic work among indigenous peoples and ethnolinguistic minorities whose languages have been under- or undocumented and severely endangered. In addition to creating a written form of the language and revitalizing their culture, which is embedded in the language, these programmes have enabled vulnerable children from remote areas to go to school and succeed in their studies, providing opportunities that had once been non-existent.

Through its funding of MTB MLE programmes, Finland has contributed to reforming many countries' educational policies in favour of MTB MLE. While implementing pilot MTB MLE projects in non-formal education is important, changes at the governmental level bring about lasting change and ensure that MTB MLE is sustainable and available nationwide. When MTB MLE is planned and resourced well, it can have a significant impact on children's access to quality education. For this reason, the MFA should continue to advocate and support MTB MLE worldwide and cooperate with NGOs and local partners that are specialized in linguistic issues and MTB MLE among linguistic minorities, including Deaf people. Finland should also continue to promote its internationally renowned expertise in inclusive education and use global instruments and channels to urge other nations to move towards the MTB MLE model in their education policies.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- This review is confined to linguistic minorities, but it is recommended that mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE) should be provided for every child who could benefit from learning in his/her mother tongue. Advocacy work and implementation of MTB MLE programmes should endeavour to give all children the right to quality education in their mother tongue. Confining this review to linguistic minorities does not paint the whole picture as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) supports MTB MLE in general – not only amongst linguistic minorities.
- The MFA should ensure that all funded MTB MLE programmes work towards the further integration of such programmes into the target countries’ official educational policies. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for example, can produce Advocacy Kits to accompany country-level educational policy reviews in the countries where they work. These reviews could indicate where advocacy interventions could help in overcoming the obstacles and challenges that exist in different countries’ educational policies, and recommend where these programmes could most readily be initiated.
- All stakeholders should ensure that MTB MLE is regarded as an indicator of education quality and equity in both national and international systems. Stakeholders should participate in alliances and networks which support MTB MLE worldwide. It is recommended that funding agencies and other stakeholders share ideas and experiences, and seek synergy on this issue. A list of prospective global channels and instruments can be found in section 2.4 of this review.
- NGOs and the MFA should engage in more cooperation when implementing MTB MLE programmes. NGOs could focus their multilingual work according to the MFA’s country strategies, where special attention is paid to inclusive education when possible. In addition, all stakeholders working in multilingual education in a target country or area should be mapped before implementing new programmes. Many NGOs and their partners have worked at the grassroots level in multilingual education for decades and have linguistic knowledge, expertise and good relations with local governmental bodies that can prove highly beneficial in advocacy work and can complement the MFA’s development cooperation in MTB MLE.
- At the international level, the MFA should stress linguistic rights more during the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. NGOs could consider participating in the UPR process as “other stakeholders” and submit recommendations on relevant topics to chosen UN states under review, which could strengthen their strategies in related policies and programmes. It is also recommended that NGOs cooperate closely with the MFA to complement each other’s argumentations and recommendations in UPR processes, as it serves as a multi-stakeholder platform in which non-governmental organizations can also engage.

- The MFA's support should focus on advocacy work and awareness-raising of MTB MLE at local, state, national and international levels. Misunderstandings and misrepresentations about the role of the mother tongue in education are rife and are often used as an argument against multilingual education. Understanding the benefits of studying in a pupil's own mother tongue is one of the most crucial steps towards achieving quality education for all. The MFA and NGOs should pursue more cooperation at local and national levels in target countries. NGOs and their local partners could document and use more Most Significant Change Stories to support advocacy work at all levels.
- All stakeholders should ensure that the MTB MLE project design is in line with solid policy based on recent research and best practices underpinned by sound theory. Every country has a different linguistic policy where education is concerned, but the overall goal should be to ensure that MTB MLE programmes are integrated into formal education, insomuch as multilingual education continues throughout primary school so that children achieve academic fluency in their mother tongue. UNESCO has published MTB MLE Resource and Advocacy Kits, which can be useful in defining guidelines for this kind of work. For its part, the Finnish Association of the Deaf has published a Manual for Sign Language Work within Development Cooperation. It is also recommended that the MFA promotes early MTB MLE approaches, whereby children have the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue even during pre-school.
- The MFA should ensure that the funded MTB MLE programmes have the necessary resources and knowledge to provide quality continuing professional development for teachers and the capacity to produce learning materials in local languages, as they form the basis for successful programmes. The production and publication of different written materials such as dictionaries, grammar books and literature in local languages should also be fostered, as they support literacy and preserve the local cultural heritage.
- The MFA should verify that funded MTB MLE programmes encompass quality teacher training according to MTB MLE methods and provide continued support for teachers. Teachers should be able to teach in the learners' mother tongue (L1) and in a national language (L2), as well as in an international language (L3). It is recommended that teacher training be deepened and developed in every programme. In addition, advocacy work should support the integration of pilot MTB MLE teacher-training programmes and curriculums into the target government's formal teacher training institutions.
- The MFA should pay more attention to ensuring that Deaf people's rights to education in sign languages are emphasized in the teacher training curriculum in particular. Deaf people are often included in inclusive education, but special education teachers generally attend few sign language classes, if any, which leaves them ill-equipped to teach Deaf students. Nor do Deaf students benefit from learning in classes with hearing peers if they do not have multilingual education which includes a sign language. The Deaf should be seen as a language minority instead of people with special needs when planning and implementing MTB MLE programmes. Teachers of the Deaf need a special teacher training curriculum based on sign languages – not on addressing a physical disability. For this reason, advocacy work promoting the training of teachers for the Deaf is of paramount importance.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This review was commissioned by Felm to provide an overview of the development cooperation and advocacy work conducted by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs on mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE) among linguistic minorities from 2006 to 2016. The objectives were to draw different stakeholders and projects together and to serve as a tool for Felm in planning and implementing its advocacy work on multilingual education, with a view to serving other NGOs and stakeholders at the same time. The review's Terms of Reference (ToR) are presented in Finnish in Annex 1. An addition was made to the ToR due to the fact that the time scope covered by the review was extended from 2006 to 2016. The review itself was conducted over a period of 25 days between December 2016 and February 2017.

The scope of the review comprises all of the aspects of the MFA's development cooperation on MTB MLE among linguistic minorities, including bilateral, regional and multilateral development cooperation, as well as civil society's development projects. In addition, it presents one programme as a case study in greater detail. The review is confined to linguistic minorities, including sign languages.

## 1.1. Methods and limitations

The review consists of a document analysis and thematic interviews. The document analysis comprised documents concerning education and linguistic policy produced by the MFA (mid-term reviews and evaluations, country-level reports, annual reports, country strategy papers), and United Nations (UN) organizations (e.g. the World Bank, UNESCO, OHCHR), as well as academic writings, and non-governmental organization (NGO) documents. The qualitative data were collected through thematic interviews with experts from Felm, the Finnish Deaf Mission and the Finnish Association of the Deaf. Some informal telephone and email enquiries were also conducted with the MFA's staff in Finland, and with embassies.

A challenge in mapping Finland's support for MTB MLE programmes among linguistic minorities is that they are integrated into the inclusive education sector. This review adopts a linguistic approach to the issue, in which Deaf people are seen as a linguistic minority rather than as people with disabilities. The Deaf are often integrated into inclusive education programmes as a beneficiary group, but the needs of Deaf people are not always classified in that sector. Finland has strong expertise in the area of inclusive education worldwide and has provided considerable funding for this sector in its development cooperation in different countries. But development cooperation that does not specifically mention the linguistic rights of Deaf people or other linguistic minorities is consequently excluded from this review, even if these groups have benefitted from the programmes and support indirectly.

## 1.2 Definitions and terminology

What is meant by the term linguistic minorities? Defining a linguistic minority is no easy task and may even be contentious. UNESCO (2003:13) points out that the concept of a minority is often ambiguous inasmuch as it can be interpreted differently in different contexts because it may have both numerical and social or political dimensions. In some cases, it may simply be used as a euphemism for non-elite or subordinate groups, whether they constitute a numerical majority or minority in relation to another group that is politically and socially dominant or not. Linguistic minority is a relative term as there are various linguistic minorities in different states. This review defines the term as people whose languages are not nationally reinforced in their country, and who also have less power to use their languages in their respective society, for example in education. National languages or other local languages spoken by the majority of the population are not classified as minority languages in this review.

When we speak about linguistic minorities, we often encounter indigenous peoples and their right to use their native languages, which are also most commonly minority languages. Indigenous peoples refers to the descendants of those who were already inhabiting a country or a geographical region when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. Indigenous languages, then again, are those that are natively spoken in a certain region and are often granted minority language status as well. In Asia, for instance, the term ethnolinguistic minority is applied most often in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and refers to a group of people who share a culture, ethnicity and/or language that distinguishes them from other communities and which is either less prevalent in terms of number or less prestigious in terms of power and economic status than the predominant group in the given state (Benson and Kosonen 2013: 4–5).

A majority of the world's population understand and speak more than one language, and there are many countries where dozens of languages are spoken. In Africa and Asia, it is not uncommon to find countries where hundreds of languages exist. Monolingualism means the ability to speak and understand only one language, while multilingualism refers to the ability to understand and speak two or more languages. The official status of languages in a country is often related to political power. According to UNESCO (2016), a language policy is an official government statement that acknowledges one or more languages in the nation and mandates that they are to be used for specific purposes, such as for government business, national education, and the mass media. A specific language policy may confer status and rights upon some or all languages spoken within the borders of that nation.

A country's language policy defines whether or not children can receive education in their mother tongue. A mother tongue is the first language that a child learns, and which they use for communicating. It can also be referred to as a native language or first language (L1). The term L1 refers to a language that a person speaks as their mother tongue, vernacular, native language, or home language. It should be noted that bilingual or multilingual people may consider several languages their home languages or first languages (Benson and Kosonen 2013: 6). A second language (L2) is broadly regarded as a language that is not the learner's first language, but one that he or she is required to study or use. A local language (also called a vernacular) refers to a language spoken in a relatively restricted geographical

area, and one that is not commonly learned as a second language by people outside the community. A language of instruction refers to the language that is used for teaching and learning in educational programmes. This is different from approaching a language as a subject in which students learn about the way it is structured and used for oral and written communication (UNESCO 2016).

The focus in this review is on MTB MLE, which is defined as classroom instruction that begins in a child's mother tongue and then gradually shifts towards national and/or international language(s) as the child progresses through primary education. It emphasizes the importance of a curriculum rooted in the local culture, as well as a teaching methodology that promotes cognitive development and higher-order thinking skills (Burton 2013: 12). Early-exit MLE programmes are part of MTB MLE programmes that use the learner's mother tongue for teaching only in pre-primary or early primary grades but then transition students into the official school language and out of their mother tongue by mid-primary. Multilingual education (MLE) refers to the use of more than two languages as the medium of instruction in schools, which do not have to be the learner's mother tongue (UNESCO 2016).

## 2. SETTING THE CONTEXT: OVERVIEW OF MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

**“Language is the key to communication. It can provide bridges to new opportunities, or build barriers to equality. It connects, disconnects. It creates unity, and can cause conflict. Language is many things, but it is rarely simple.”**

**(Kosonen, Person, Phongsathorn, Young, Bista & Bang 2013: 26)**

Language is a crucial part of a person’s identity and culture – it is the cognition that makes us human. Approximately 6,900 languages are spoken throughout the world, depending on different estimates and definitions, adding to the rich linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity. Many of the languages used by linguistic minorities are only in spoken form and some are in severe danger of disappearing altogether. According to recent studies, half of the world’s languages will be extinct by the end of this century (Thomason 2015: 3).

Since the last decade, education has triumphed in many developing countries, where millions of children have gained the opportunity to go to school. Although much has been accomplished, obstacles and challenges remain in achieving quality education for all children across the globe. Language is without a doubt one of the most important factors in the learning process, and the language factor emerges strongly as one of the most salient determinants of quality in education. Unfortunately, most of the linguistic minorities go to school every day with a great burden because they do not speak or understand the language of instruction at school. For many children, being forced to drop out of school is not due to physical or monetary barriers, but to the decision for them to be taught in a language that they do not understand (UNESCO 2016).

In the longer term, the most vulnerable people will remain poor and excluded if their right to education is not fulfilled because of the language policy in a society where they already face exclusion and marginalization. The loss of linguistic diversity can be equated with the loss of humanity’s heritage. Language is always embedded in culture and when people’s linguistic rights are not respected, it adversely affects their cultural identity and violates their right to practice their own culture. Language rights should be embraced not least because they promote diversity, tolerance and non-discrimination worldwide (D’Emilio 2009, Pinnock & Vijayakumar 2009: 6).

## 2.1 Minority languages

As argued in section 1.2, the term linguistic minorities may be problematic, but this review defines it as people whose languages are not nationally reinforced in the country or area where they live. Moreover, it refers to people who lack political power and the right to use their language in public, such as in educational institutions. Many of these people are also indigenous peoples or ethnolinguistic minorities who, in addition to their own distinct language, also have their own culture and traditions that stand out from the majority of the population. A common feature of minority languages is that many of them are endangered and disappearing. The disappearance of a language occurs in bilingual or multilingual contexts in two ways; firstly, when the last speaker of the language dies or, secondly, when speakers switch to speaking another language – most often a larger language or national language used by the majority group. This normally happens when the parental generations do not pass the language on to their children. Hence, fewer children are learning indigenous languages in the traditional way from their parents and elders (May 2012). This has also resulted in the loss of oral traditions as language is deeply embedded in culture.

When we speak of languages, we normally mean the spoken form of a language, but the term also applies to modalities such as sign languages. A sign language is a full-fledged, rich and complex language that the Deaf learn as their natural language if exposed to it. Sign languages have developed in each country spontaneously, based on the natural need for the Deaf to interact. No single sign language is shared by all Deaf people worldwide, but there are instead many distinct sign languages that are often named after the country or area in which they are used, forming the core of the Deaf people's culture and identity in that area (Emmorey 2002:1–2).

In every society, the Deaf should not merely be seen as a people with disabilities, but as a linguistic minority. As a language minority, the Deaf have a culture and an identity that are linked to the shared experiences that Deaf people have, and to the sense of belonging to a sign community. In contrast to spoken minority language groups or indigenous language users, most Deaf children are born to hearing parents, which means that there is no other Deaf person in their family. This causes problems in communication. When hearing parents and siblings have no signing skills and no knowledge of sign languages, Deaf children can become isolated even within their own families (Finnish Association of the Deaf 2015:15).

Although sign languages should be considered minority languages, in most countries they remain unknown or unrecognized. As a result, Deaf people usually lack the right to education in their own language. In developing countries, the status of sign languages is often very weak. Deaf people are a linguistic minority and hence the absence of the right to learn and use their own language actually inflicts a disability on the deaf. A weak ability to understand the surrounding world results in difficulties in coping independently with everyday functions as adults. In the worst cases, Deaf people live entirely without a language or an education. Naturally, Deaf people can also be born with an additional disability; this means that they can be considered disabled in addition to belonging to a language minority. However, without a mutually comprehensible language, it is difficult to envisage how any support to address the additional disability can effectively be offered (Finnish Association of the Deaf 2015: 13–14).



## 2.2 Language and education

Education is one of the most important ways for people to move out of poverty. A strong basic education is the core, but many linguistic minority children struggle at school when they are forced to learn in a foreign language. School systems that do not use learners' own languages or that do not respect their cultures make it extremely difficult for children to stay in school and learn. Multiple studies have proved that children learn better in their own language (Smits, Huisman & Cruijff 2008; Bialystok, Peets and Moreno 2014; UNESCO 2016). In monolingual schools, children belonging to a language minority are expected to learn to read and write in the official school language before they have learned to understand and speak it. In many cases, children have not even heard the language before. In addition, Deaf children can start school without knowing any language at all. For example, half of the world's out-of-school children do not necessarily speak the language used in the local school (World Bank 2005:1).

In many African countries, colonization has had a huge impact on language policies in education where English or another former colonial language is still commonly used as the primary language of instruction at school. For instance, imported European languages which served as the language of colonial administration have overshadowed African languages. Notwithstanding Africa's multilingualism and cultural diversity, the majority of children start school using a foreign language despite the fact that less than 15 per cent of the population are estimated to be fluent in the international languages used in education in most African countries (Ouane & Glanz 2010; Chiatoh 2005: 3)

In Southeast Asia, many children are taught in languages that are not spoken in their immediate community. The area has rich linguistic diversity with more than 1,200 languages spoken in the region, but colonialization has also left its mark on many countries' education policies. Most Southeast Asian countries have prioritized the national and official languages in their education systems in order to build a unified nation (Kosonen 2017: 2–3). However, according to Kosonen and Young (2009), children who cannot learn in their mother tongue are also those who are over-represented among the out-of-school population. Such language policies have been proven to cause low-quality education, and can only benefit a tiny and elite minority, mostly in urban areas. Moreover, members of this minority can also speak national or international languages. Hence, the majority of the linguistic minorities who live in rural areas have not enjoyed the benefits of an education.

According to Pinnocks and Vijayakumar (2008: 12–13), literacy becomes a particular challenge when children do not know the language used to teach reading and writing. Literacy can be described as the process of linking the ideas associated with spoken words to written text. If a child does not understand the meaning of a word – used in a foreign language – reading and writing are simply based on rote. Children only learn to copy and recite texts from blackboards and books without developing the ability to produce new writing for themselves. What is most disconcerting is that children never become fully literate if they do not already know the language in which reading and writing are taught well enough. Such language policies have not been successful and have resulted in low academic achievement, grade repetition, and dropping out. It is no surprise that many schools in developing

countries where such policies are applied are ineffective and students have low academic achievements. In many cases, school remains an unfamiliar and sometimes frightening place for children from non-dominant language groups (Kosonen 2005).

## Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE)

The best way to overcome these challenges is through MTB MLE, which aims to address this educational issue by recognizing a child's mother tongue, culture and context as the foundation of learning. In MTB MLE programmes, children learn in their mother tongue, and also learn the official language or other L2 as a school subject. As learners gain competence in speaking, reading and writing in the national language, teachers begin using it for teaching. The best MTB MLE programmes encourage learners to use both languages for communication and for learning throughout primary school (UNESCO 2016).

MTB MLE functions best when a child's mother tongue is used as the primary language of teaching, beginning in the first years of school and continuing for as long as possible. The mother tongue is referred to as the learner's first language (L1), which remains the key language of education throughout. For linguistic minorities, acquiring proficiency in national and international languages is also crucial in order to communicate with broader society, to gain access to public services, and to take advantage of further study and employment opportunities. Starting in the language they know best allows children to build a strong foundation, which duly enables them to make an effective transition into other national or international languages – known as second language(s) (L2) – which are added to the curriculum later (UNESCO 2005). Pinnock and Vijayakumar (2009: 19) argue that the L2 should not become the main language of teaching and learning for at least six years. A third language (L3) can be added at a slightly later stage when children have already developed their linguistic and cognitive skills through their mother tongue.

The use of MTB MLE has multiple benefits. Using their mother tongue helps children to adjust to the new school environment, added to which they learn more effectively and have more self-confidence. Thus it makes the transition from home to school more natural. When children can use their own language in school, they achieve better grades because it improves the quality of learning and, as a result, they are unlikely to drop out. The most productive focus for MTB MLE is to embed culturally relevant education in a comprehensive approach; in this way, the needs and interests of linguistic minorities are compatible with the curriculum and children learn more easily. Moreover, parents become more favourably disposed to send their children to school.

MTB MLE has facilitated considerable advances in the psychosocial sphere. When the same language is used at home and in the classroom it engenders greater confidence among children. In bilingual schools, children are happier to learn, are more expressive and have higher self-esteem compared to those who are not in bilingual schools (D'Emilio 2009). According to Benson (2002: 303–317), better communication and interaction encourages students to be more active and to participate more readily in class. Moreover, family members play an important role in non-formal education. The use of the mother tongue helps to promote

better understanding and communication between home and school. In the same vein, parents and other family members can be involved and support the children's education.

MLE education has successfully reduced the educational gap between boys and girls since girls have been reported as having fewer opportunities than boys to complete primary school (D'Emilio 2009). According to UNESCO (2007), parents may be more confident about placing their girls in schools where the language of instruction is their mother tongue, as it reflects a familiar culture and set of values. Most commonly, teachers in MTB MLE schools are from their own communities, and parents have more confidence in teachers that they know. Furthermore, Benson (2005b) argues that the possibility to work near home encourages female students from linguistic minorities to attend teacher training courses and become teachers in their own communities where MLE schools exist. In this sense, they also become important role models.

Moreover, MTB MLE programmes are cost-effective. According to a cost-benefit analysis of MTB MLE, their implementation costs more to set up, but in the longer term leads to reduced repetition and dropout rates, thus resulting in significant cost savings (Pinnock & Vijayakumar 2009: 21–22). Indeed, UNESCO (2007) has urged society to contemplate the cost of an education system that results in failure for most learners who do not speak the language of instruction used at school.

For Deaf children in particular, MTB MLE at school is of the utmost importance. Deaf children may start going to school without knowing any language, which then has a deleterious effect on their development and learning opportunities. When Deaf children have been subjected to an unsuitable oral education, it has been known to cause serious damage such as widespread illiteracy and increased mental health problems. In comparison, when Deaf children can study in sign languages, they achieve good literacy and can subsequently learn the national languages (or other L2) more easily as well (Kosovar Association of the Deaf 2010: 22, Lahtinen & Rainó 2016: 56).

The success of MTB MLE programmes hinges on the teachers who implement them. Therefore, it is extremely important for teachers to understand the goals of MTB MLE and for them to be trained in the use of MTB MLE teaching methods. In successful MTB MLE programmes, the teachers themselves have been members of the local linguistic minorities. Besides the ability to teach in the pupils' mother tongue, they have an instinctive understanding of the customs and values of their learners, such as Deaf or indigenous children, for example. Teachers from the same local community can stand alongside the children as they struggle to negotiate the differing ways and customs of the dominant culture (Cheffy 2011:7). Hence, the most important key actors in MTB MLE programmes are those teachers who can speak and teach both in the child's mother tongue (L1) and in the national language or other language (L2) used in that area. In some programmes, international languages (L3) can also be added to the curriculum, which calls for teachers who have the capability of teaching them according to MTB MLE methods.

There are many examples of successfully implemented MTB MLE programmes around the world. MTB MLE has been particularly successful in Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines (Kosonen 2017). Finally, as D'Emilio (2009) points out, it

is important to recognize that linguistic minorities' right to education in their own language is not only important on account of the multiple benefits it provides, but also because it is their human right. This is often misunderstood in developing countries, where inclusive education is sometimes seen as voluntary.

## Challenges

But why is the language issue of such an extremely sensitive nature that many countries have not altered their educational policies in favour of MTB MLE despite the encouraging pedagogical results? The answer lies in the fact that there is often a powerful motivation for governments to promote one national language across the nation. In many countries, policymakers suspect that the use of local languages in education can result in excessive ethnicization, which may lead to conflicts and divide nations. Instead, international or national languages are seen as a means of achieving national cohesion, openness to others and receptiveness to technology. The consequences of this are not only political or emotional, but also instrumental by denying access to quality education for all (Ouane 2005: 1; Chiatoh 2005: 3; Kosonen & Young 2009: 16).

Although policymakers are not usually involved in the actual implementation of MTB MLE programmes, their active support is essential for the long-term success of the programmes. One of their most important contributions lies in establishing a political climate that supports strong mother tongue-based MLE (UNESCO 2007). Therefore, advocacy work and close cooperation with government officials is important. It is also crucial to note that linguistic transformations in education take time and that the impact is often visible only after many years. Sustainable results require significant political commitment from the local government and the development of administrative and technical capabilities throughout the education system.

One of the challenges facing MTB MLE projects is mapping out the key government stakeholders in order to understand who needs to be involved. Any language-related issues will involve cross-department decision-making, requiring the formation of committees to consider and address these issues. This can be a long process, demanding considerable patience and investment to keep them moving forward. It will take time to establish trust with those influential members of the target society who are able to advise on how to navigate the complex politics.

Another significant obstacle in implementing MTB MLE in different countries has concerned economic factors that have slowed down the programmes. In some cases, education reforms may have been introduced at the government level, but due to the lack of necessary funding for producing learning materials or teacher training programmes, they have not succeeded, despite good intentions. Moreover, as teachers are the most important actors in carrying out MTB MLE, attention needs to be paid to teacher training as well as continuous support for MTB MLE teachers. It is challenging to find competent teachers who can speak both the learners' mother tongue (L1) and the L2, and who are willing to teach in the remote areas where linguistic minorities normally live. In addition to procuring teachers

with appropriate MTB MLE teaching methods, well-functioning MTB MLE programmes need culturally relevant learning materials produced in the learners' mother tongue. In the most successful programmes, the culturally relevant materials have involved the linguistic minority in collecting and documenting the oral literature into a written form, which has strengthened their cultural identity.

It is important to note that MTB MLE programmes differ. There are educational programmes called early-exit MLE programmes that use the learners' mother tongue for teaching only in pre-primary or early primary grades, but then transition students into the official school language and out of MTB MLE. However, research suggests that early-exit MLE programmes constitute weak models. Initially, the children seem to manage quite well, but as soon as the mother-tongue-medium education ends, it transpires that it was inadequate (Skutnabb-Kangas 2009). Late-exit programmes use the MT exclusively for instruction in early to mid-primary and then use a mix of the MT and official school language for instruction. The research literature provides solid evidence that late-exit programmes are educationally more effective than their early-exit counterparts (UNESCO 2016). Using mother tongue-based multilingual education for too short a time period will not deliver significant improvements. Every child is different and thus gifted minority or indigenous children have little difficulty in achieving academic success by learning in a foreign language. However, it has been shown that MTB MLE should continue throughout primary school.

General confusion seems to reign due to insufficient information about MTB MLE (Kosonen & Young 2009: 16). Many parents and students prefer to learn in an international language, such as English, as it is seen as a passport to the global community and better job opportunities. Due to a long history of using international languages in higher education, some parents do not believe that meaningful education is possible in their mother tongue beyond the early years of primary education. But as shown above, students achieve more when they build a solid foundation in their mother tongue before learning other languages. Learning in one's mother tongue will not harm a child's acquisition of national or international languages. On the contrary, mother-tongue instruction has actually been demonstrated to improve national language proficiency compared to monolingual instruction in the national language. Therefore, it is important to educate parents and students alike to recognize the difference between learning English as a medium of instruction and learning English as a subject in MTB MLE programmes. Creating awareness among parents about the benefits of MTB MLE is crucial for the successful implementation of these programmes (Pinnock & Vijayakumar 2009: 21).

## 2.3 Linguistic rights

What are linguistic rights and what do they imply? Linguistic rights and the right to receive education in one's mother tongue or native language are recognized in several international instruments ranging from various conventions and declarations to recommendations, frameworks and programmes of action. Minority groups and indigenous peoples should have access to at least two languages, to their mother tongue and to an official language. Linguistic

rights promote multilingualism and the use of multiple languages in all domains of public life, including education (Kontra, Phillips & Skutnabb-Kangas 1999: 68).

Language rights can be found in various human rights provisions, such as the prohibition of discrimination, freedom of expression, the right to private life, the right to education, and the right for linguistic minorities to use their own language with others of their group. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, defines the right to education as one of the basic human rights.

Since the 1950s, education experts have emphasized the importance of mother tongue-based education. In November 1953, UNESCO published a report on the use of vernacular languages in education, which emphasized the right to receive education in one’s mother tongue. This report has played a highly influential role in focusing attention on recommendations that children should begin their schooling in the mother tongue (UNESCO 1953). Article 5C of the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education from 1960 states that “it is essential to recognize the rights of members of the national minorities and depending on the educational policy of each State, the use or the teaching of their own language” (UNESCO 1960: 6).

Another instrument which recognizes indigenous children’s right to use their mother tongue is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In Article 30 of the CRC, it is stated that no indigenous child should be denied the right to use his or her language (UNHCR 1989:9). Likewise, in ILO C169, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of 1989, it is stated in Article 28 that “children belonging to the peoples concerned shall, wherever practicable, be taught to read and write in their own indigenous language or in the language most commonly used by the group to which they belong” (ILO 1989: 7).

Similarly, in 1992, Article 4 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities urged the creation of favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture and language (UNHCR 1992:3). According to the Salamanca Framework for Action (1994) “schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions” (UNESCO 1994: 6).

Institutions and non-governmental organizations met at the World Conference on Linguistic Rights in Barcelona in June 1996, where the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights was adopted. Article 24 of the Declaration asserts that: “All language communities have the right to decide to what extent their language is to be present, as a vehicular language and as an object of study, at all levels of education within their territory: preschool, primary, secondary, technical, and vocational, university, and adult education” (UNESCO 1995: 27).

The World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) was launched at the Jomtien World Conference in 1990. The EFA represents an international commitment which ensures that every child and adult receives basic education of good quality. This was taken to a new level of global interest through the World Education Forum on Education for All, held in Dakar in 2000. The Dakar Framework of Action 2000 Assessment set six major EFA goals to be achieved by 2015. These goals comprise expanding and improving early childhood development, ensuring access to education for all children, meeting the learning needs of

all children including indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities, reducing adult illiteracy, eliminating gender and social disparities, and improving all aspects of quality education (UNESCO 2000: 75).

192 UN member states and at least 23 international organizations resolved to achieve eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Goal number two is to achieve universal primary education, with the commitment that by 2015 all children would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Goal number three is to promote gender equality and to empower women, with the target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education at all levels by 2015. Moreover, the UN's 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states in Article 14 that "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning" (UN 2008: 7).

Most recently, inclusive education stands for equal and quality education for all persons with and without disabilities, and is among the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (UN 2015). The international community's commitments to achieving these goals will not be met if minority and indigenous children struggle at school due to poor language policy and practice. Moreover, the language used for teaching and learning at school can either be a major barrier or an enabler in achieving national and international education commitments (Pinnock & Vijayakumar 2009: 8).

## 2.4 Global channels and instruments for promoting mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE)

Global channels and instruments form an avenue for developing and promoting MTB MLE education worldwide and for carrying out advocacy work on linguistic rights. Collaboration with global actors enables information-sharing on the current situation and the challenges facing multilingual education. International organizations such as UNICEF, UNRWA, the World Bank, USAID, Australian Aid and the EU among many others have funded and implemented MTB MLE programmes around the world. For instance, the EU has supported the Hardest to Reach through Basic Education Programme, which aims to contribute to the achievement of Bangladesh's development goals and to a national basic education framework. Another example is when the EU, together with the Thailand Research Fund, funded a three-year (2013–2016) MTB MLE teacher training project entitled "Implementing a Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education Curriculum in the Teacher Production Process in Thailand's Southernmost Provinces".

Unfortunately, an overview of all of the different programmes that have embraced MTB MLE is beyond the scope of this study. However, below are listed examples of global channels and instruments that have MTB MLE as a special focal point in their strategies, as well as a brief overview of the UPR Process. Finland's development cooperation together with funding towards multilateral development cooperation are presented in section 4.3. and an analysis of Finland's recommendations for UPR processes are presented in chapter 3.

**The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** works to improve human rights protection for indigenous peoples and minorities at international and national levels through strategies such as strengthening relevant legislation, policies and practices, as well as through undertaking capacity-building activities, while promoting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and other key human rights standards. The OHCHR conducts focused activities, for example in the field of “Good Practices in Policing and Minority Communities”, which offers an opportunity to share and collect experiences while focusing on practices that have proved to be successful. The Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues has developed a draft handbook called *Language Rights of Linguistic Minorities*.

**The Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** is a mechanism of the UN’s Human Rights Council, the ultimate goal of which is to improve the human rights situation in every country. The UPR process is a significant innovation of the Human Rights Council, providing an opportunity for all member states to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situation in their countries. In addition, the UPR process includes sharing the best human rights practices among member states and other stakeholders. Moreover, it provides technical assistance to enable states to deal with human rights challenges effectively.

The unique multi-stakeholder and cooperative approach of the UPR provides a valuable platform for different stakeholders to engage with. In addition to UN member states, the UPR process fosters participation by all relevant stakeholders, including NGOs, national human rights institutions and regional mechanisms. They can participate in a variety of ways such as lobbying members of the Working Group, monitoring and participating in the implementation of UPR recommendations by the State under Review, by taking the floor at the Human Rights Council during the adoption of the report, sending information on the human rights situation in the respective country, and by participating in the national consultations held by the State under Review. Indeed, one of the greatest advantages of the UPR process is the opportunity it provides to amplify ongoing national advocacy initiatives, as well as provide the access and opportunity for NGOs to create space for dialogue and advocacy with governments (CIVUCUS 2015).

**The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** is firmly committed to supporting MTB MLE approaches in education. UNESCO provides normative frameworks for language policy and education and shares good practices in bilingual and multilingual education, and mother-tongue instruction. Its objective is to ensure that formal and non-formal education delivers quality education for all learners by taking a multilingual approach, which has great potential for achieving development goal four of the 2030 Agenda. UNESCO’s Education 2030 Framework for Action, a roadmap for implementing the 2030 Agenda, encourages full respect for the use of the mother tongue in teaching and learning, as well as the promotion and preservation of linguistic diversity. UNESCO emphasizes that multilingualism plays a vital part in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda (UNESCO 2016).

UNESCO has also launched International Mother Language Day, which is celebrated every February 21st. It was proclaimed in UNESCO’s General Conference of 1999 and has been



celebrated every year since 2000 to draw attention to endangered languages and the importance of preserving them. For example, the theme for 2016 was “Quality education, language(s) of instruction and learning outcomes”, and the theme for 2017 “Towards sustainable futures through multilingual education”. This underlines the importance of mother tongues for quality education and linguistic diversity, coupled with advancing the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNESCO 2016).

**The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)** is the world’s largest regional security organization. The OSCE works for stability, peace and democracy for more than a billion people and has 57 participating states spanning Europe (including Finland), Central Asia and North America. The OSCE is a forum for political dialogue on a wide range of security issues and a platform for joint action to improve the lives of individuals and communities. According to the Organization, language conflicts are pervasive in the world today. When the linguistic rights of both majority and minority groups are included in legislation, tensions will be reduced. This can be achieved through efforts to ensure multilingualism throughout society, and through using positive rather than punitive measures. If one language is promoted at the expense of others, this may be a considerable source of inter-ethnic tension.

Education programmes are an integral part of the OSCE’s efforts in conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities engages participating states in formulating national minority education policies in such a way that they maintain the essential elements of the identity of minorities and support the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to education in and about minority languages. The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities regularly reminds both government and minority representatives of the right to education in and about minority languages, as well as the responsibility they have in ensuring that people belonging to minorities master the state language.

**SIL International** (formerly known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics) is a faith-based non-profit organization committed to serving language communities worldwide. SIL’s linguistic work includes research, translation, training, and the development of materials. SIL actively participates in networks and partnerships with government organizations, local groups and other INGOs to serve the world’s linguistic minority communities. SIL also enjoys a special consultative status with the UN’s Economic and Social Council, as well as formal consultative relations with UNESCO.

A primary activity for SIL is supporting communities in their efforts to develop education programmes that enable children and adults to become fluent readers and writers in their own mother tongue and also to gain fluency in a language of wider communication. SIL has conducted linguistic analyses of more than 2,590 languages spoken in nearly 100 countries. The organization works all over the world in 85 different countries with over 800 partner organizations. In addition to SIL, there are other faith-based organizations, such as the **Wycliffe Global Alliance**, whose aim is to translate the Bible into local languages and which has also supported MTB MLE education programmes.

**The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)** is a forum for policy dialogue on education policies, and a partnership between African education and training

ministries in Africa and their technical and funding partners active in education. ADEA is also a network of policymakers, educators and researchers. The Association is grounded in its capacity to foster policy dialogue and pool ideas, experience, lessons learned and knowledge, and to serve as a catalyst for educational reform.

The main principle underlying ADEA’s philosophy is that the responsibility for education rests with the governments of Africa. It is for this reason that ADEA is intent upon fostering a process that empowers African ministries of education and makes development agencies more responsive to the concept of national ownership. ADEA’s activities help strengthen policy dialogue not only between governments and agencies, but also inter-governmentally and between development agencies. The Association is governed by a Steering Committee composed of African ministers of education and representatives of multilateral and bilateral development organizations who support education in Africa. ADEA has organized regional conferences on bilingual education and also on the Integration of African Languages and Cultures into Education.

**The African Academy of Languages (ACALAN)** is an organization under the Department for Social Affairs of the African Union Commission. Its main objectives are to foster Africa’s integration and development through the development and promotion of the use of African languages in all domains of life across the continent, and to promote convivial and functional multilingualism at every level, especially in the education sector, including education in partnership with the languages inherited from colonization. ACALAN has, for example, organized train-the-trainer workshops for trainers of teachers of African languages for mother tongue/multilingual education (ACALAN 2012).

**The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)** is a regional intergovernmental organization established in 1965 by the governments of Southeast Asian countries to promote regional cooperation in education, science and culture in the region. The organization’s highest policy-making body is the SEAMEO Council, which comprises 11<sup>1</sup> Southeast Asian education ministers. The SEAMEO Secretariat is located in Bangkok, Thailand. SEAMEO supports MTB MLE education and enhances the learning capacity of ethnolinguistic minorities in Asia. SEAMEO also collaborates with UNESCO, UNICEF, the Ministry of Education of Thailand, Save the Children, SIL and other stakeholders. For example, the Organization has implemented many MTB MLE programmes such as “Mother Tongue as Bridge Language of Instruction”, sponsored by the World Bank. In October 2016, SEAMEO was one of the organizing partners for the 5th International Conference on Language and Education: Sustainable Development through Education (MLE5) in Bangkok. The Conference brought together more than 300 participants from 34 countries to discuss sustainable development initiatives as well as challenges, and to showcase solutions related to MTB MLE.

There are also a number of smaller MTB MLE networks such as the **Mother Tongue-Based MultiLingual Education Network**, which is an association of individuals and agencies that share a common vision whereby all children have the right to receive a quality education in a linguistically and culturally appropriate environment. Another such body, **the Myanmar/**

<sup>1</sup> Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

**Burma Indigenous Network for Education (MINE)**, is a pan-ethnic education network established in Burma to promote an educational reform that would allow young children to learn in their mother-tongue languages at government schools. It is made up of 24 education organizations representing 12 indigenous peoples living in remote, often conflict-ridden areas across Myanmar. In addition, there are various country-level organizations in many countries such as the **Ethiopian Multilingual and Multicultural Professionals Association** and **the Ethiopian Multilingual Education Network**. Mapping all of the stakeholders in the target country is beneficial for advocacy work and for implementing new programmes.

### 3. FINLAND'S ADVOCACY WORK IN THE UN UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW PROCESS

As a member of the United Nations, Finland contributes to the Universal Periodic Review process conducted by the Human Rights Council. This report analyzes in greater detail the recommendations given by the government of Finland on the linguistic rights of minority groups and indigenous peoples to the states under review. Finland has submitted a total of 303 recommendations to 85 countries in all of the UPR cycles.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process is a mechanism of the UN's Human Rights Council. It was created through the UN General Assembly on March 15, 2006 through Resolution 60/251. The ultimate goal of the UPR is to improve the human rights situation in all countries. The UPR process is a significant innovation of the Human Rights Council, providing an opportunity for all member states to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situation in their own countries, and all states can likewise participate in the discussion with the states under review. In addition, the UPR process entails sharing the best human rights practices among the member states and other stakeholders, providing technical assistance and enhancing the states' ability to deal with human rights challenges effectively.

The UPR process involves a review of the human rights records of all UN member states, which are reviewed approximately every four and a half years. For the purposes of the review, the Universal Periodic Review Working Group holds three two-week sessions a year to go through all the records of the member states during the 4.5-year cycle. Up to now, the UPR process has had two review cycles. The first cycle started in 2008 and involved a review of all UN member states, with 48 states reviewed each year during the four-year period. This review cycle was concluded in 2012. The second cycle started in 2012 and was concluded in 2016. In the second cycle, 42 states were reviewed each year. The third cycle got underway in April 2017 during the 27th session.

Recommendations form a key element of the reviews. These comprise suggestions made to the state under review to improve the human rights situation in the country. The state under review can decide to accept or to note the recommendations. Every state has the primary responsibility of implementing the recommendations contained in the final outcome. The accepted recommendations should be implemented by the next review, when the state is expected to provide information on any actions and developments in the field of human rights.

### 3.1 The first cycle 2008–2012

During the first UPR cycle, Finland submitted 158 recommendations to 57 member states that were under review. The complete database contained more than 52,000 recommendations by the end of December 2016. Due to the sheer volume, there may well be cases where certain relevant recommendations are not labelled under the right category. In the UPR Process Database there is no discrete issue or category for linguistic rights or MTB MLE. However, linguistic minorities' rights to MTB MLE can be included under the following categories or issues:

- Indigenous peoples
- Minorities
- Right to education
- Rights of the child
- Women's rights
- Disabilities

One recommendation may also fit under multiple categories and, in such cases, many recommendations were intersectional as they referred to multiple issues. As there is no specific category dedicated to linguistic rights, this study covers the main topics under which linguistic rights can be subsumed.

Finland submitted most of its recommendations on women's rights issues and the rights of the child, with 37 recommendations referring to the former, and 35 recommendations to the latter. Finland submitted 29 recommendations related to minorities, and a further 25 on the right to education. Concerning linguistic minorities' language rights, there were two direct recommendations. One of them was issued to Mozambique and concerned including the expansion of bilingual education (education in the mother tongue) during the first years of primary schooling in the next education sector strategy programme, which was duly accepted by Mozambique. The second recommendation was given to Russia and concerned intensifying its efforts to ensure the provision of education in minority languages.

When considering matters relevant to this study, Finland submitted three recommendations to Tanzania on the issues of disabilities, the right to education, and the rights of the child. These recommendations proposed improving schools and other educational facilities and environments to meet the needs of people with disabilities, training all lecturers and teachers in inclusive education, and providing disabled pupils with adequate equipment and tools.

These recommendations were quite general in nature, and did not specify whether they included the Deaf and their right to receive education in sign languages. Finland also submitted two recommendations on indigenous peoples' issues, concerning the right to land and conflict prevention. The government of Tanzania accepted all three recommendations apart from those concerning indigenous peoples.

Finland gave one recommendation to Pakistan on the issue of the right to education, urging immediate measures to ensure that adequate resources are allocated for education. This recommendation was accepted by Pakistan. Nepal was given three recommendations by Finland in the categories of minorities, the right to education, the rights of the child and women's rights, all of which were accepted. These recommendations emphasized that:

All girls, Dalit children and children belonging to ethnic minorities should have equal access to quality education.

Parents and parents' groups should reach out to promote equal access to education and participation in local institutions for their children.

Parents should be encouraged to appreciate the value of education and the benefits of participation.

Furthermore, Finland recommended paying special attention to helping Dalit children, girls, and children belonging to ethnic minorities to complete their educational cycle, and to ensuring their employment opportunities after education. This was encouraged to enable them to claim their rights and to work as change agents for their communities. However, these recommendations did not express the right to education in their mother tongue.

An overview of Finland's recommendations made during the UPR Review Process in the first cycle revealed that Finland referred most frequently to women's and children's rights and educational issues in its development policy. The government of Finland submitted recommendations on 39 different issues in total, ranging from justice to racial discrimination, among others. In addition, Finland gave two specific recommendations on linguistic rights.

**Table 1: Finland's top five recommendations during the first cycle of the UPR process 2008–2012**

Rank	Issue	Recommendations
1.	Women's rights	37
2.	Rights of the child	35
3.	Minorities	29
4.	Right to education	25
5.	International instruments	20

### 3.2 The second cycle 2012–2016

During the second UPR cycle, Finland submitted a total of 136 recommendations to 72 states that were under review. The most common issue was women's rights with 42 recommendations, followed by the rights of the child with 40 recommendations. Finland submitted 32 recommendations on the issue of international instruments, making it the third most common issue. The fourth most common issue concerned minorities, with 15 recommendations.

The majority of Finland’s recommendations during the second cycle were given to states other than those outlined in this review. What is notable is that Finland gave two recommendations to Botswana on indigenous peoples’ issues, the right to education and the rights of the child. These recommendations urged the government to take all appropriate measures, including adequate resource allocation, strengthening indigenous children’s equal access to education, including education in their mother tongue when possible, and adopting effective measures to enhance the participation of indigenous peoples in issues that affected them and their rights as an indigenous group.

Botswana did not accept the recommendations, but noted them. However, Botswana responded to the Human Rights Council by stating that the government of Botswana appreciates the importance of using the mother tongue during the early stages of schooling and is exploring different strategies for accommodating mother-tongue education in its education system, which would include the use of teacher aides at primary school level (OHCHR 2012:11).

Finland gave recommendations to Nepal on the issues of minorities, the right to education, the rights of the child, treaty bodies and women’s rights. These recommendations included ensuring equal educational opportunities for all children, including girls and Dalit children. This recommendation was accepted.

**Table 2: Finland’s top five recommendations during the second cycle of the UPR process 2012–2016**

Rank	Issue	Total recommendations
1.	Women’s rights	42
2.	Rights of the child	40
3.	International instruments	32
4.	Minorities	15
5.	Freedom of opinion	12
5.	Justice	12

### 3.3. Summary of key findings

The recommendations represent an overview of the priorities in Finland’s development policy. Finland stressed the need to advance women’s rights and the rights of the child in both cycles. The main topics relating to these two issues concerned domestic and sexual violence, but other issues that were emphasized included education. A high number of Finland’s recommendations focused on the right to education – especially in the first cycle. Most recommendations focused on support for and access to education, as well as enforcing the principle of non-discrimination. Finland also recommended ensuring the rights of minorities. These recommendations were issued mainly to European countries and referred to the situation of the Roma, but some recommendations were also issued to ensure equal

educational opportunities for the Dalit children in Nepal and indigenous children in Botswana. Finland also urged Mozambique to extend multilingual education to the first years of primary schooling, and Tanzania received recommendations to the effect that it should improve the educational rights of people with disabilities.

All in all, Finland submitted recommendations 294 times during the two cycles. The recommendations were in line with Finland's foreign policy and cooperation priorities, in which the most vulnerable groups are emphasized: women, children, people with disabilities, minorities and indigenous peoples. The issue of linguistic rights was mentioned in the contexts of indigenous peoples, minorities, the right to education, and the rights of the child. Concerning the general nature of the issues, it is noteworthy that Finland gave three recommendations directly related to linguistic rights during the two review cycles, as minority groups and indigenous peoples are subject to considerable challenges and discrimination. However, Finland could be more active in promoting MTB MLE in UPR processes and urge other nations to include multilingual education in their education policies.

The UPR is a valuable tool for challenging and encouraging UN member states to do more to promote MTB MLE. In addition to UN member states, NGOs also have many opportunities to take part in and influence the UPR process, as do other stakeholders. NGOs can submit reports as part of a coalition or individually, depending on the size and capacity of the organization as well as the situation in the country under review. The UPR report can be very concise and focus on just a few issues, duly providing a useful context for linguistic rights as they often garner less attention when included in wider themes.



## 4. MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION AMONG LINGUISTIC MINORITIES IN FINLAND'S DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Finland's development policy and development cooperation are guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is endorsed by the UN. Finland is committed to supporting developing countries in their efforts to implement the Agenda. The main purpose of Finland's development policy is to eradicate extreme poverty, and to reduce poverty as a whole and inequality. Human rights form an essential part of Finland's development policy, and development cooperation is practised through a human rights-based approach. Gender equality, the reduction of inequalities, and climate sustainability are cross-cutting objectives in Finland's development policy and are therefore advanced by all interventions (MFA 2016a: 7). The MFA has placed emphasis on the strengthening of Results-Based Management practices in development cooperation, which shifts management attention away from inputs, activities and processes towards the desired outcome and what has actually been achieved. Results-based management is applied in all phases of development projects and programmes (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016c).

As this review is confined to development cooperation in MTB MLE among linguistic minorities (as defined in section 1.2), some aspects of the MFA's development cooperation in MTB MLE have been excluded. In actual fact, the programmes targeting linguistic minorities in MTB MLE are often implemented by NGOs, as Finland's development cooperation supports more of a sector-wide approach towards education, which includes linguistic work. What is more, in many countries, education in sign languages is not provided by the formal sector and hence they depend more on private stakeholders, such as NGOs and INGOs. It is important to mention that Finland has supported MTB MLE, for example in Ethiopia where it has promoted the use of local languages such as Amharic, Oromifa, Somali, Hadiyisa, Sidamu, Wolayita, and Tigrigna in the education sector. The boundaries of what constitutes a minority language may well be shifting, but these languages are among the eight major languages spoken by the people of Ethiopia and are thus not considered minority languages in this review.

## 4.1 Regional cooperation

Finland funds regional development cooperation in multiple countries, where it supports regional integration and the resolution of cross-border issues. Finland finances and implements regional cooperation in many areas where it has specific expertise, including education. In the Andean region, Finland has supported MTB MLE in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru.

### The Andean region

Intercultural Bilingual Education in the Andean Region (EIBAMAZ) was a multilingual education project developed in the Amazonian and Andean regions. It was implemented during 2004–2012 with Finnish support as multi-bi aid. EIBAMAZ was put into practice by UNICEF at both the regional and the national level through an agreement with the MFA. The main goal of EIBAMAZ was to develop the institutional capacity to support indigenous peoples' language rights and to guarantee the rights of Amazonian children and young people to a better education by enhancing the national and regional capacities of intercultural and bilingual education (Castro & Pallais 2015:10–12).

EIBAMAZ worked with indigenous peoples in the most remote and poorest areas of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. These three countries share both Andean and Amazonian regions, and are particularly rich in linguistic and cultural diversity. EIMABAZ worked with the following indigenous groups: the Mosestén, Tsimane, Takana, Movima and Cavineño in Bolivia; the A'í Kofán, Secoya, Siona, Huao-rani/Waorani, Sápara, Achuar, Shuar, and Kichwa Amazonía in Ecuador; and the Shipibo, Ashaninka, and Yine in Peru.

The project comprised three main components: bilingual intercultural education research, material development for intercultural and bilingual education, and teacher training. Sponsored projects focused on creating teaching and learning materials in indigenous languages, and providing teacher training. Moreover, the project involved local families in the development through community organizations (Nielsen, Prouty & Bennett 2015: 29). Prior to EIBAMAZ, the education available for indigenous children was of poor quality and did not respond to their needs. Offering MTB MLE was a challenge in the area because the majority of teachers could not teach according to MTB MLE methods, which required teaching in the indigenous children's mother tongue and using Spanish as a second language.

The evaluation report (Castro & Pallais 2015) found that EIBAMAZ had a considerably positive impact on the lives of the people in all three countries. The indigenous Amazonian peoples have a close relationship with the spiritual world and do not separate spiritualities from science. EIMABAZ produced learning materials that reflect an indigenous logic, which helped the children to understand the concepts used in school and promoted their inclusion in the national education systems (Nielsen, Prouty & Bennett 2015). In Peru, EIBAMAZ increased awareness in the Ministry of Education of the special needs of Amazonian communities. Prior to EIBAMAZ, the Ministry of Education had no clear policy on who should receive intercultural and bilingual education, but after its implementation, an institutionalized policy on intercultural and bilingual education was created. Moreover, EIBAMAZ instilled a

renewed sense of identity, self-esteem and interculturality in the Amazonian communities. It helped them to retain their own linguistic and cultural identities and increased their visibility for the rest of society.

Since the implementation of the bilingual education project, the indigenous Amazonian children have gained greater self-esteem and renewed their sense of identity. The use of indigenous languages brought about a change in classroom communication patterns as the children were able to participate more actively. In addition, the project had a positive effect on the inclusive education policy and practice in all three countries. EIBAMAZ has unequivocally contributed to the attainment of human rights with a long-term perspective in all three Amazonian countries. EIBAMAZ adopted a bottom-up approach that emphasized working with and empowering parents and local communities and advocates, and duly enjoyed considerable success in enabling these stakeholders to implement policy changes in bilingual education (Castro & Pallais 2015).

## 4.2 Bilateral partners

Bilateral development cooperation is an important facet of Finnish cooperation with developing countries. Bilateral cooperation refers to cooperation agreed between Finland and a partner country government. Bilateral aid represents flows from government sources directly to official sources in the recipient country. In the Finnish government's budget, bilateral cooperation is included in country-specific and regional development cooperation and includes bilateral technical assistance programmes (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016c). Finland engages in bilateral development cooperation with 14 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The cooperation is based on the partner countries' own development plans and on dialogue conducted with them. Finland's partner countries in Africa include Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia and Eritrea. In Asia, Finnish bilateral support focuses on Afghanistan, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Vietnam, Kirgizia and Tajikistan, as well as on the Palestinian Territory in the Middle East.

According to EU recommendations, Finland should concentrate its action in each partner country on three areas of cooperation in which it has specific expertise. These areas of cooperation are determined together with each partner country. Since 2013, Finland has contributed special country strategies for its seven long-term partner countries, namely Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, Zambia, Tanzania and Vietnam.<sup>2</sup>

### Nepal

Nepal is Finland's long-term development partner country, with Finland contributing to the improvement of human rights and the reduction of poverty amongst the most marginalized and vulnerable people in the country. Education is one of the three sectors where Finland has focused its development cooperation with Nepal, duly promoting equal access

<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing, the MFA was updating its country strategies and hence further analysis of MTB MLE in the MFA's country strategies is not provided.

to education (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2014a). Finland has cooperated in this sector in Nepal since 1999 and has paid special attention to children belonging to marginalized groups and their rights to quality education (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2014:13). Over the past ten years, Finland has contributed to and funded many educational programmes in the country, paying specific attention to linguistic minorities and MTB MLE (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2014a).

Nepal is a multiethnic and multilingual country where more than 120 languages are spoken. Most of the minority languages are still un- or under-documented and confined to pre-literate traditions. The majority of indigenous languages are endangered for one reason or another. The Nepali language is the official language, while all of the other languages spoken as a mother tongue are national languages. Many non-Nepali speakers live in remote areas where there is little exposure to the Nepali language. Many of the non-Nepali children have very few or no opportunities to hear or speak Nepali before they begin school, where it is used as the language of instruction. For this reason, non-Nepali children have been found to constitute a disadvantaged group in the Nepalese school system. The participation of non-Nepali-speaking students in primary education is low and their achievement at school is also lower when compared to that of Nepali-speaking students (Government of Nepal Ministry of Education 2015).

Finland supported three MTB MLE programmes in Nepal from 2006 to 2016, and was likewise one of five pooling donors that supported *the Nepal Education for All (EFA) 2004–2009 Programme* together with Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the World Bank. EFA aimed to provide access to education for the majority of school-age children who were not currently enrolled in school, and to ensure that those already in school were retained. An additional focal point was to enhance the quality of primary education.

The objectives of the project were to ensure access to and equity in primary education, improve efficiency and institutional capacity, and contribute to sustainable socio-economic development and equity through the enhancement of the quality and relevance of basic primary education for children and illiterate adults. One of EFA's six goals<sup>3</sup> was to meet the learning needs of all children, including those of indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities. The project aimed to guarantee the rights of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to quality basic and primary education in their mother tongue. EFA's long-term development objective was to improve access to education, especially for girls and children from disadvantaged groups (Independent Evaluation Group 2015: 8; Cambridge Education Ltd & METCON Consultants 2009).

According to the Independent Evaluation Group (2015), EFA succeeded in reaching its access and equity targets, achieving gender parity and representative percentages of historically disadvantaged students enrolling in primary education. When it comes to linguistic minorities, EFA's results revealed a reduction in the share of out-of-school girls, Dalits and children from disadvantaged Janajati groups. Furthermore, transitional language support was provided for students who did not have Nepali as their mother tongue (Independent Evaluation Group 2015: 15–27).

<sup>3</sup> The other five goals were to expand and improve early childhood education, ensure access to education for all children, improve adult literacy, eliminate gender disparity, and improve all aspects of quality education.

In addition to EFA, the government of Nepal developed a national framework for introducing an MTB MLE programme for non-Nepali-speaking children between 2007 and 2009. The MTB MLE programme was launched in 2007 by the Department of Education of Nepal with Finland's technical assistance, which was provided by the Finnish Consulting Group (FCG) and continued until 2009. The FCG team supported the Nepalese education authorities in the process of building up the National Medium of Instruction Strategy. The programme was implemented in six different districts with eight different languages (Ball 2011:18; Dutcher 2003). In the MTB MLE classes, the children's mother tongue was used as the language of instruction and Nepali was used as a second language subject from grade 1 or 2 onwards. Additional languages, such as English, were also introduced in the curriculum.

The MTB MLE programme has brought about a host of positive changes in the lives of children, parents and teachers in Nepal. Where MTB MLE was implemented, the non-Nepali-speaking children showed more enthusiasm for attending school and their performance correspondingly improved. It has been reported that interaction between teachers and students has increased, the classrooms have become joyful places, and the children are more relaxed in the learning environment. Parents have pointed out that since MTB MLE has been implemented, their children love going to school. Drop-out rates have also been significantly reduced (Dutcher 2003).

Finland concluded its technical assistance to the MTB MLE programme in 2009. Nepal's national education policy allows the implementation of MLE schools and the government of Nepal planned to implement MTB MLE in over 300 of them. However, while these programmes have produced positive results and enjoyed success, MTB MLE as an approach has not been widely adopted nor supported by the public education system today due to funding and resource limitations. In addition, after Finland ended its assistance, many teachers complained about the lack of learning materials and other teaching necessities (Lhomi 2016). The programme undoubtedly had an impact on non-Nepali students' learning skills and motivation, but lost momentum due to a lack of financial support.

After the MTB MLE programme ended in 2009, Finland continued to fund the education sector together with other donors through participation in the pooled fund mechanism for the implementation of the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) through a Sector-Wide Approach programme (SWAp) in 2009–2016. According to the MFA (2014a:13), the SSRP SWAp has successfully promoted universal access to basic education and achieved gender parity in enrollment at all levels.

The overriding objective of the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) was to increase access to education and improve the quality of education, particularly for children from marginalized groups. The aim was to expand access to education and reduce inequality, improve the quality and relevance of teaching, and to strengthen the institutional capacity of the entire school system. In essence, the SSRP supported the whole school education sector. In the case of multilingual education, the main objectives included producing learning facilitation materials in 96 different languages and implementing multilingual education in 7,500 schools. The most important achievements of the SSRP were a substantial increase in access to education, the achievement of gender parity in education, a decrease in illiteracy and class size, as well as an increase in the number of educated teachers. The second phase of the programme began

in 2016 and comprises the government of Nepal's major educational initiative for 2017–2023. The second stage is based on the achievements of the first and in order to ensure continuity, the main objectives remain largely the same (Nielsen, Prouty & Bennett 2015: 28).

## Mozambique

In Mozambique, Portuguese has been the exclusive language of instruction in schools, as well as a subject in primary and secondary education. This has caused enormous difficulties for children in rural areas who have never encountered Portuguese before. The language issue has been widely regarded as one of the main factors contributing to the high repetition and drop-out rates in Mozambican primary schools, since less than half of the population can speak Portuguese (UNICEF 2016).

Mozambique is one of Finland's long-term development partners and Finland has funded its education sector since 1997. Finland's Country Strategy 2014–2017 for Mozambique emphasizes the right to education for all children, equality in education, and also mentions the importance of supporting MTB MLE. Finland contributes to the latter with a particular emphasis on formal education and early childhood development. At the policy level, Finland contributes to the dialogue in the area of multilingual and early childhood education and monitors the inclusion of cross-cutting objectives within the sector, such as gender equality and the reduction of regional disparities (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2014b:13–15).

Finland has also supported the common sectoral fund FASE (Education Sector Support Fund), which is a pooled fund involving collaboration between ten bilateral and multilateral partners and the government of Mozambique's Ministry of Education. Its aim is to support the effective implementation of the Mozambican government's Strategic Plan for Education (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016b). Finland served as the chair of FASE in 2015–2016, during which time Finland stressed the rights of all children to educational equality and access to MTB MLE. Finland has contributed nine million euros per year to FASE on average, two million euros of which have been used to extend MTB MLE, including teacher training and the production of learning materials (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016b).

The Mozambican Ministry of Education has announced that from 2017 onwards, primary education will become fully multilingual, with children in the first two years of school being taught in 16 Mozambican languages. The reason for the success of Mozambique's bilingual primary school reform is that the government has prioritized education and the Ministry of Education has devised a strategy to achieve equality in education. It is fundamental to support partner country governments and NGOs in implementing similar multilingual programmes and policies in order to achieve sustained results.

### 4.3 Multilateral partners

Finland's multilateral development cooperation entails working through international organizations such as the United Nations (UNICEF, UNESCO, UNRWA), the World Bank, the EU,

and regional development financing among others, where Finland finances the activities of these multilateral actors. The funding consists of membership fees and core contributions, as well as financial contributions to development banks. Hence, it is difficult to analyze Finland's contribution to specific MTB MLE programmes among linguistic minorities implemented through these multilateral partners. At the advocacy level, Finland can contribute to the improvement of practices within these organizations by placing special emphasis on the strategic planning of activities and coordinating with other actors and evaluating results. One impressive channel for promoting important issues is to serve as the chair for multilateral partners.

As an EU member state, Finland supports development in different parts of the world. The EU has implemented MTB MLE programmes in Asia, for example. Finland also participates actively in EU development policy decision-making in order to address issues of importance for Finland by participating in the meetings of Ministers for Development in the Foreign Affairs Council, and by contributing to the preparation of decisions taken in the Council of Ministers, for example.

Another important multilateral channel is the World Bank, which has also financed many MTB MLE programmes, particularly in Asia. Finland is also active within regional development financing institutions, such as the African, Asian and Inter-American Development Banks, the Nordic Development Fund and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). In Africa, Finland supported ADEA in 2014–2016

with 1.2 million euros. Through its support, Finland aims to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the African educational field. For instance, ADEA and the African Development Bank have supported MTB MLE in Africa.

## 4.4 Finnish non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

The work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) forms an important part of Finland's development cooperation. Finland has funded many MTB MLE programmes among linguistic minorities through these NGOs. This study is confined to development cooperation funded by the MFA, but it is important to note that many Finnish missionary organizations and Finnish missionaries have translated local languages and conducted early missionary linguistic activities for religious purposes. Moreover, according to Heugh (2005:10), the legacy of missionary work points to the development of written texts that have facilitated the linguistic work and served to push MTB MLE programmes forward, compared to other areas where literature is absent.

### Wycliffe Bible Translators Finland

Finland has funded the Finnish Wycliffe Bible Translators' (WRK) different MTB MLE projects in Indonesia, Kenya, Cameroon and Nepal since 2010. In **Indonesia**, WRK has supported

a Mother Tongue-based Early Childhood Education Programme in Maluku province. The programme developed pre-school materials in the Ambonese, Malajji and Nualu languages, and a special curriculum was also developed in Malajji. The programme benefitted 700 children per year and enabled them to learn in their own mother tongue in pre-school. One of the goals of the programme was to support awareness-raising among local families, communities and officials who implement educational policies. In addition, in Papua, WRK supported a Papua Mother Tongue-Based Education Programme that provided MTB MLE for the Edopi, Kiri-Kiri, Tause, Bauzi, Ngalik and Dani linguistic minorities. The programme operated in 14 schools where about 360 adults gained access to adult literacy classes in their mother tongue, and also educated teachers to use learning materials in local languages.

In **Nepal**, WRK supported the Lhomi Community Development Project. The Lhomi people live in a remote area in the highlands in northeast Nepal, Khandbari and Kathmandu. The project aimed to highlight the common development problems among the Lhomi, which include extreme poverty, child and mother mortality, a non-functional healthcare system and poor education. In terms of MTB MLE, three pilot MLE pre-schools were set up. The project was implemented by the Nepal Lhomi Society (NELHOS) with the cooperation of WRK and was supported financially by the MFA. According to NELHOS, the project has had a favourable impact and has served to empower the Lhomi people. During the first stage, approximately 85% of the project's participants were women.

In **Kenya**, WRK has been supporting a Mother Tongue Education Programme for Indigenous Languages from 2015 to 2017. The purpose of the project is to develop language materials for Orma, Digo and Duruma from grades 1 to 3 within a three-year period, with the aim of establishing parity in the education levels of children in the Kwale and Tana River counties with other children in the country by allowing the children to learn in their own mother tongue. Moreover, in **Cameroon**, WRK has supported MTB MLE in 11 minority languages spoken by indigenous people, targeting illiterate youth and adults. Teacher training and the production of learning materials in minority languages are also included in the programme.

## The Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD)

The Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD), with the support of the MFA, has collaborated with Deaf communities and with national associations of the Deaf in different parts of the world through development cooperation programmes that have improved the human rights of Deaf people. The work among Deaf people has included raising linguistic awareness, sign language research and documentation, training sign language teachers and interpreters and also networking and cooperating with relevant stakeholders such as universities and government institutions (Finnish Association of the Deaf 2015: 15–16).

FAD has successfully implemented the Sign Language Work<sup>4</sup> model, and notable goals have been achieved in Kosovo and Albania in particular. FAD has cooperated in the Balkan region with local associations of the Deaf in joint development projects for over ten years, committing the local authorities from the beginning. As a result, the local sign language has received

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<sup>4</sup> More information can be found by visiting [www.slwmanual.info](http://www.slwmanual.info).



an official status both in Kosovo (2010) and in Albania (2014), while a sign language dictionary, in both video and print form, was produced in Albania in 2005, and in Kosovo in 2012.

A more comprehensive, web-based Albanian Sign Language dictionary with a grammar section is to be published in Albania in 2017. Moreover, as a result of the collaboration with the Kosovar Association of the Deaf (KAD), the Ministry of Education in Kosovo has launched a sign language training programme for teachers of the Deaf, which also requires any professionals working with Deaf children in an educational setting to acquire signing skills after a transitional period. In Albania, a similar process is taking place between the Albanian Deaf organization (ANAD) and the education and social ministries. In Kosovo, Deaf people now have the legal right to free interpretation in public institutions with accredited sign language interpreters trained by KAD.

Prior to FAD's cooperation in Kosovo and Albania, there were no sign language interpreters or services. In Kosovo, illiteracy was ten times higher among Deaf children at age 15 compared to hearing children at the same age. In Albania, 97% of Deaf adults graduating from basic education were operatively illiterate. The lack of means for interacting with the hearing community without interpreters and with a low rate of literacy has consequently led to isolation, unemployment and poverty (Kosovar Association of the Deaf 2010: 26).

In order to improve the situation, FAD has implemented the Sign Language Work model using a community-based and deaf-led approach. The work needs to include Deaf people because of their inherent knowledge of sign language and Deaf culture. The Sign Language Work is conducted by Deaf people themselves assisted by trained Deaf and/or fluently signing hearing advisers assisted by local hearing people, mainly interpreters, in the later stages of the work, which requires competence in both sign language and written language (Finnish Association of the Deaf 2015: 25).

The Sign Language Work model consists of four main goals and long-term objectives. Goal number one includes raising linguistic awareness within the Deaf community. Most Deaf people are illiterate and struggle with learning and communication difficulties. Since the majority of the Deaf are born into families where there are no other Deaf family members, it is important for them to realize their right to use sign language and become aware of their identity and Deaf culture.

Goal number two is to conduct sign language documentation and research. The aim is to document the sign language used by a particular signing community where documentation has not been produced before. When sign language data is collected, it forms the basis for creating dictionaries and for grammatical descriptions of the language. However, Sign Language Work respects linguistic variation and promotes the right to use different variants (Finnish Association of the Deaf 2015: 18–23).

Goal number three is to share and disseminate information about Sign Language Work. It is important to deliver information about the progress of the model to relevant groups and stakeholders, such as the country's governmental bodies and institutions. Finally, the fourth goal is to develop skills for lobbying and advocating for human and linguistic rights. Through discussions with government officials, Deaf representatives are able to present concrete

facts about the barriers that Deaf people face, and highlight areas where improvements are needed (Finnish Association of the Deaf 2015:18–23).

Long-term goals need to be set for a period of ten to twenty years from the beginning of the work. If implemented, in practice this points to significant positive changes for Deaf people in terms of their access to society, and in receiving free interpretation services and information in sign language provided by the government. It also enhances Deaf children's access to bilingual education using sign language.

The Sign Language Work process undoubtedly leads to the empowerment of the Deaf community. The first major externally visible milestone of the work is that the target country's government recognizes the sign language through an official decision or other official act. This forms the basis for the further enactment of changes in the relevant fields (education, access to the media, and so on). According to the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), government institutions are obliged to offer services in sign languages and to promote and respect their use. The CRPD also highlights the importance of training teachers of the Deaf and developing bilingual education in sign language (Kosovar Association of the Deaf 2010: 35).

Sign Language Work has also led to a linguistic awakening among the Deaf in Albania and Kosovo. The work of FAD with the Finnish Government's support in Kosovo and Albania is an encouraging example of how the linguistic rights of Deaf people can be improved in the education sector and how their linguistic rights can be implemented in the government's legislation. The successful model of FAD's Sign Language Work can be recommended as a foundation for other MTB MLE programmes involving Deaf people.

## The Finnish Deaf Mission

The Finnish Deaf Mission has a long history of supporting Deaf people and their rights to education in Tanzania, Eritrea and Botswana. The MFA has funded the Finnish Deaf Mission's construction project in Tanzania, where the Njombe School for the Deaf was built between 2006 and 2008. The aim of the project was to build a special school for Deaf people where they could have access to MTB MLE. Equally, the objective was to promote the rights of the Deaf and to raise awareness about Deaf people and sign languages in general. In 2011, the responsibility for managing the Njombe School for the Deaf was transferred to Felm. However, the Finnish Deaf Mission has continued its own support for the Njombe project, which has been essential as the teaching standards are still not up to par and there is a need for qualified sign language teachers. At present, Njombe is the only secondary school for Deaf people in Tanzania and it is owned by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania.

## Felm

Felm has a development cooperation programme funded with the MFA's support. With this support Felm has implemented MTB MLE programmes in Laos, Cambodia, China, Nepal, the Palestinian Territory, Tanzania, and Ethiopia since 2006. Felm has also supported the use of Senegal's national languages (Wolof, Serer and Poor) in education in Senegal. These

languages are the three main languages spoken in Northern Senegal but in this review they are not included as minority languages.

Felm has implemented other MTB MLE programmes through its church funded church co-operation programme, for example in Angola, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Papua New Guinea. Felm's church cooperation on linguistic issues comprises roughly 70% of its work on linguistic rights, which is not reflected in this review. Instead, the review presents an overview of Felm's MTB MLE programmes funded by the Finnish MFA in development cooperation.

In **Ethiopia**, the educational language policy is unique compared to Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, as the Ethiopian government promotes the use of mother tongues as the medium of instruction. The federal government defines the framework of the school curriculum, but each regional state produces materials that are reflective of the local culture and languages. Felm has funded the EECMY SEP-Deaf Project since 2003 as part of the Hosanna School for the Deaf, together with its local partners, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yasuse (EECMY) and the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. The Ethiopian government has adopted and implemented a number of laws, policies and standards pertaining to people with disabilities, but in practice their status may still be difficult due to cultural beliefs. The Hosanna School is a residential institution for Deaf students as well as those living in surrounding rural areas. The school provides preparatory education for beginners and grades 1 through 8 (elementary and middle school), as well as grades 9 to 10. The school is unique in providing both academic education and vocational training for Deaf students at an early age.

The aim of the EECMY SEP-Deaf Project has been to improve the quality of education of Deaf children in Ethiopia by improving the teaching methodology of those teaching Deaf pupils. Another goal has entailed awareness-raising about sign languages and Deaf culture. The project provided complementary training courses for teachers working with Deaf children and for education sector officials responsible for special education (Teklemariam 2012: 4, 6–7).

The project has achieved many targets to date and is still ongoing. Teachers have developed a better understanding of Deaf children, and their motivation to teach has been heightened. Likewise, the quality of education for over 5,000 Deaf students has been enhanced. In addition, 2,000 Deaf children have gained access to education, while over 1,000 teachers and special education officials have received complementary training on the education of Deaf students. Moreover, Deaf students have been given better access to formal teacher training, which has resulted in an increased number of qualified teachers who can teach in sign language. The overall attitude towards the Deaf has changed and they are now seen as being just as capable as hearing people (Felm 2015a).

Felm also funded SIL Ethiopia's MTB MLE "Bench-Maji Zone Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Project" between 2008 and 2015 in the Bench-Maji Zone of Southwest Ethiopia. SIL Ethiopia has been carrying out a language development and multilingual education project in six languages in this Ethiopian region (Baale, Bench, Diizin, Me'en, Sheko, and Suri) in collaboration with the zonal government since 2008. The purpose of the cooperation between SIL and Ethiopia's government was to further the goals of MTB MLE, language research and sustainable language development with special emphasis on minority language areas.

The aim of the project was to develop six languages in the area for use in primary schools. None of the languages in the area were in a written form representative of those spoken by the great majority of the population. The project strengthened MTB MLE in primary schools by developing orthographies for the local languages, producing school materials, enhancing the capacity of teachers, teacher trainers, dictionary specialists and school inspectors, as well as maintaining local cultures. The project's success lay in a carefully executed linguistic study coupled with the involvement of community representatives. Hence, great strides were made in Bench-Maji thanks to local activity and through involving many people, some of whom may not even have been literate.

The project has resulted in a positive attitude throughout the wider language community, and the attitude towards the use of a mother tongue as a medium of instruction has been improved. Students' motivation, achievement and retention rate in the pilot MTB MLE classes exceeded those in the non-mother-tongue classes. Over 100 MTB MLE teachers and material developers have been trained and the requisite curricular materials and human resources for the subsequent classes have been developed. By 2015, MTB MLE pilot classes had been established at 16 schools and the government had extended MTB MLE to 110 new schools with over 13,000 students (Felm 2015a).

In **Tanzania**, Deaf people have been ostracized and the use of sign languages is unfamiliar to the majority of the population. The majority of Deaf children reside in remote rural villages where there are few schools qualified to serve them. The educational challenges for Deaf children in Tanzania resemble those in most developing countries, and misconceptions are rife about their capacity to learn at school. The corresponding Felm programme aimed to build the capabilities of the staff at Njombe School for the Deaf and improve the status of Deaf people and sign language in general during 2011 to 2013 in partnership with the local Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania – ELCT.

Administration of the Njombe School for the Deaf project was transferred from the Finnish Deaf Mission to Felm in 2011. The Njombe Secondary School is the only Secondary School in Tanzania exclusively for students with hearing disabilities. Very few teachers in Tanzania have the capability to teach in sign languages. Moreover, the Tanzanian government designates teachers to schools, which has led to situations whereby teachers are not able to teach Deaf people according to MTB MLE methods. Challenges such as these have been the focus of Felm's work when producing learning materials, providing teacher training, and employing teachers of the deaf at the Njombe School.

In **the Palestine Territory**, Felm has supported sign language as an elective course with a well-developed curriculum at the Birzeit University, which has been open to all students. The Deaf have constituted a vulnerable group with many restrictions and limitations imposed on their lives in Palestine. All Palestinian schools for people with disabilities are private or privately funded. Birzeit University is an independent, non-profit Palestinian institution of higher education, and the department of Arabic in the Faculty of Arts was responsible for monitoring and updating the course. The project was implemented to empower the Deaf and to achieve greater solidarity between the hearing and their Deaf peers.

The sign language course has opened up many opportunities for integrating Deaf students into the university environment. In addition, it has raised awareness about sign languages and Deaf people in general. A longer-term objective was to enable students studying sign language to be trained as legal interpreters. The course has become so popular and has earned such an excellent reputation that since Felm ended its support due to financial cuts in the MFA's development cooperation funding, Birzeit University has been able to finance and continue it through tuition fees.

In **Cambodia**, Felm has supported indigenous peoples in the northeastern region of the country in the Mondulakiri and Ratanakiri provinces through three different programmes: RIDE, READ and Identity-Based Community Development and Education (iBCDE). The partner organization for all three programmes has been International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC). The iBCDE is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The largest ethnic group in Cambodia are the Khmer, who make up approximately 90 per cent of the population. The medium of instruction at all levels is the national language, Khmer, even though about 20 languages are spoken in the country altogether. The indigenous peoples in northeastern Cambodia have their own languages and, for them, Khmer is unfamiliar.

ICC READ (Research, Education And Development) is an adult biliteracy programme carried out among the marginalized and ethnic Bunong people in the province of Mondulakiri. Felm supported the programme between 2006 and 2011, but ICC initiated the project in 2001. READ promoted literacy and learning in Bunong (L1) and in the national language, Khmer (L2). The aim of the project was to empower the Bunong through literacy, numeracy and learning the national language. READ provided non-formal education for the Bunong ethnic minority, produced material in the Bunong language, and established village libraries (Felm 2015c:16–17).

Felm supported the ICC RIDE (Ratanakiri Integrated Development and Education) programme between 2004 and 2011. The project had already been running in Ratanakiri since 1997. RIDE was an adult biliteracy programme for the indigenous ethnic minority people in Ratanakiri province, Cambodia. It provided non-formal education for ethnic minorities and especially for women and children among four indigenous minority communities in the province – the Brao, Kavet, Krung, and Tampuan. RIDE focused on increasing literacy, both in the mother tongue (L1) – Brao, Kavet, Krung and Tampuan – and in the national Khmer language (L2). The project successfully implemented non-formal training sessions through local village teachers. Bilingual curricula and teaching and learning materials were produced in five indigenous languages, village libraries were established, and local people were encouraged to get involved in language development and the collection of cultural material for increased sustainability (Stone & Benson 2012: 4,15–16).

The READ and RIDE literacy classes were designed to meet the needs of indigenous peoples; hence, classes were held during evening hours and were flexible during the year in tune with planting and harvesting schedules (Vitikainen, interview). Both programmes empowered indigenous people to make informed choices regarding their well-being and development and to participate effectively in the affairs of the wider community and nation.

ICC's literacy classes reached marginalized indigenous people that had little or no access to formal education. The programmes had the effect of improving the education of indigenous people and reinforcing their cultural identity (Stone & Benson 2012: 44).

READ and RIDE were instrumental in changing attitudes towards ethnic minorities, resulting in positive changes in the national education policy. The projects also had a significant impact in the areas of literacy and life skills, after having gained the respect and trust of communities and the government, and thus enabling people to participate more fully in their own communities and in society at large (ICC 2014).

Through the READ and RIDE programmes, ICC, together with SIL's linguistic experts, has contributed to the orthographic development of five indigenous languages that previously had no writing systems – Tampuan, Krung, Kavet, Brao and Bunong – and has published numerous books and stories in indigenous languages and the Khmer language. By 2012, ICC RIDE had developed 637 titles in Tampuan, Krung, Kavet, and Khmer, while ICC READ had focused solely on Bunong and Khmer, developing 77 book titles (Stone & Benson 2012: 53–54). According to the ICC READ Project Evaluation Report (2009), READ achieved impressive gains in line with its goals, and about 732 students (388 of them female) have participated in bilingual (Bunong-Khmer) literacy classes.

As the MTB MLE programmes for the indigenous people in Cambodia were successful, Felm started to survey linguistic work opportunities in the neighbouring country of Laos in order to extend the MTB MLE pilot programme to other areas with indigenous populations. Felm duly started to work in the northern regions of Laos, where the indigenous Akha people live in remote mountain areas in ethnic groups made up of several ethnic sub-groups and other associated groups with clans and lineages. The Akha have traditionally been semi-nomadic, slash-and-burn agriculturalists. They speak a tonal Sino-Tibetan language, which has different dialects, combined with strong and rich oral traditions.

Laos has cultural and linguistic diversity embracing more than 80 languages. The medium of instruction at school is Lao, and the curriculum is based on the Lao majority culture, which does not reflect the rich Akha culture and values. Hence, schooling has been an alien concept for the Akha people because it does not represent their culture and social system. Together with other stakeholders such as SIL, Felm supported two multilingual MTB MLE programmes in Laos – the “Ethnic Community School Readiness Pilot Project” (ECSR) and the “Akha Cultural Play Group Proposal” – with culturally relevant approaches.

SIL has been an important partner in providing technical expertise in language development, education in minority contexts, and in supporting the training of staff in developing materials and teacher training. The projects were implemented in collaboration and dialogue with government stakeholders, who were important for project implementation and for the achievement of project goals. According to Felm's Programme Proposal Report (2012), in early planning meetings, both the ministries of education and culture expressed great interest in the development of local curricula initiatives that could be used for non-formal education.

The ECSR programme supported MTB MLE for Akha children in Laos during the years 2013 to 2015. The purpose of the project was to demonstrate how the local curriculum can

be effectively developed and utilized for ethnic minority communities in support of Laotian government targets for inclusive education. The project approach focused on action research, empowerment, capacity-building and advocacy. The project proper aimed at using the language, culture and local context for the materials, which has resulted in the production of more story books, videos and activities that capitalize on local knowledge, proverbs, humorous anecdotes, and traditional art forms. In addition, community members were recruited to facilitate learning and to provide support for first-grade teachers in villages where children enter first grade without any abilities in the Lao language.

In a similar vein, the aim of the Akha Cultural Play Group Proposal was to implement a culturally relevant play-group pilot which demonstrates how local curricula can be effectively developed and utilized for ethnic minority communities in support of Laotian government targets for inclusive education. Its overall goal was to improve the living conditions and livelihoods of the poorest communities in Mai District, Phongsaly Province and to identify the challenges in the area with an integrated and holistic approach which seeks to build village leadership to address local development challenges through a participatory approach. The project operated in a challenging environment as many villages in Mai District are remote with very poor access to public services (Felm 2012). These MTB MLE piloting programmes have been important in Laos as a country where local languages are not included in the formal education system.

In **Nepal**, Felm has supported the work of the United Mission of Nepal (UMN), which has worked closely with Nepal's Ministry of Education, local NGOs and community schools to ensure equitable access to quality education and a child-friendly teaching environment in schools since 2008. The Multi-Lingual Education (MLE) programme has marked a breakthrough in education in the ethnic minority areas of Kapilvastu and Rukum, where children have had the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue. The support and cooperation of the District Education Offices in these districts has been critical in enabling proper implementation of the programme. This has helped significantly in reducing elementary school pupils' dropout rate because of linguistic barriers. More than 4,000 children are currently benefiting from the programme and up to 2,000 children from the Tharua and Magaria linguistic minorities have been able to learn in their mother tongue (UMN 2016).

The government of Nepal recognizes the rights of children and adults to be educated, particularly during the early years of schooling in their mother tongue. Moreover, multilingual education in Nepal is gaining greater momentum. However, challenges remain in providing quality MTB MLE as many schools lack learning materials in local languages. There is also a need for awareness-raising due to the fact that although the government of Nepal has an approved educational policy which permits multilingual education, in practice many local communities are not considering it (UMN 2016).

Felm has worked in **China** for over 100 years, where its MTB MLE work has concentrated on Deaf people and training for professional sign language teachers and instructors. The first phase of Felm's Bilingual Deaf Education project was implemented in 2012–2014 and the second in 2014–2016. Felm collaborated with the Amity Foundation during the project, which drew on the successful experiences of the Foundation's previous SigAm Bilingual Deaf Education project.

The Bilingual Deaf Education project involved seven schools, some of which had already used MTB MLE spontaneously before entering the Felm project; these included schools such as Tancheng County Special Education School and Yueyang City Special Education School since they were influenced by promotion of the SigAm project and have identified with a bilingual approach. The aims of the project were to advocate sign language as the first language of Deaf people, and Chinese as their second language, and to support the equal and fair participation of Deaf people in Deaf education in order to raise multi-language and multi-cultural awareness in society. Added to this, the project focused on supporting Deaf people in teaching at schools of the Deaf and on affording Deaf people the same respect and social status as hearing people by accepting and recognizing the importance of sign languages and Deaf culture.

During the project, teachers used sign language first to help Deaf students deepen and enrich their understanding of signing before matching this with the Chinese Sign Language. The Chinese Sign Language was then taught as the L1 and Chinese as an L2. One important as well as challenging aspect of the teaching included teaching parents sign language, which enabled them to communicate better with their Deaf children. The teachers participating in the Bilingual Deaf Education pilot project consisted of both Deaf teachers and hearing teachers.

According to an evaluation of the first phase (Felm), thanks to the implementation of bilingual Deaf education, the capacity of teachers and parents has improved through both training and activities. The projects have served to develop both pre-primary and primary teaching and have increased awareness of the importance of the Chinese Sign Language. The recognition of sign language and the social status of the Deaf have also improved in general in the project schools, and to this end, all schools have arranged sign-language training.

The second phase of the Bilingual Deaf Education project comprised the same concepts as phase one. In addition, the second phase promoted the further development of sign language training, support for both Deaf and hearing teachers, and advocacy work vis-à-vis sign language and Deaf culture, particularly on campus. Unfortunately, the Finnish MFA cut the development aid in 2015, which had a knock-on effect on Felm's development cooperation. The Bilingual Deaf Education project was concluded after completion of the second phase due to a lack of financial support in 2016.



## 5. LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE: FELM'S IDENTITY-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION PROGRAMME (iBCDE) IN CAMBODIA

Felm has also supported International Cooperation Cambodia's (ICC) "Identity Based Community Development and Education Programme" (iBCDE) in Cambodia. As a partner, ICC has a long history of working on language development in the region in cooperation with other partners such as UNESCO and CARE. In particular, ICC has been the main actor in developing minority languages in Cambodia. The iBCDE programme was implemented by ICC with the support of five stakeholders – Felm, TEAR Australia, TAI, Interact, and Normisjon – and throughout the project ICC advocated and collaborated with the government of Cambodia at different levels, especially in areas related to education. ICC has been working in the remote areas of northeast Cambodia for over a decade and in light of the encouraging learning results among the indigenous people, the government of Cambodia has increased its valuable support for multilingual education.

The iBCDE programme was initiated by ICC's READ, RIDE, and BCIBE projects in response to ICC's relationships with the community, participatory needs assessment, and encouragement from Cambodia's Ministry of Education for ICC to expand its education work. According to ICC, the core objectives of iBCDE were to help indigenous people to recognize the value of their culture and forest resources, to get themselves organized, and to build relevant education initiatives, sustainable livelihoods and community well-being (ICC 2013). The indigenous languages used to be unwritten, and hence one of the main objectives of the programme preceding iBCDE was to create orthographies for these languages and to obtain governmental approval for them.

### 5.1 Background

The Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri provinces in northeast Cambodia are amongst the poorest regions in the country. They consist of semi-mountainous and largely forested areas that have been sparsely populated historically and are relatively isolated from the rest of the country. The majority of the population is made up of indigenous peoples, all of whom have a distinct language and belief system. The status of the indigenous peoples of northeast Cambodia can be described as marginalized and vulnerable. Traditionally, their livelihood has been based on rotational farming, with fishing, hunting and gathering wild produce from the forest supplementing their crops. Today, the indigenous peoples in Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri are facing dramatic changes to their environment and livelihood (Felm 2013).



Brao youth living near Se San river are taking an exam in reading and writing.

People in rural Cambodia are highly vulnerable to climatic effects. Many environmental challenges such as the loss of traditional livelihoods, deforestation, overfishing and land alienation have hampered the everyday lives of indigenous peoples. Indeed, the Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri provinces are among the three most environmentally vulnerable regions throughout Southeast Asia. Due to the new challenges that have impacted their traditional way of life, they are under pressure to adapt and conform (ICC 2014).

The majority of the indigenous people in Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri do not speak Khmer, the national language of Cambodia, and most of them are also illiterate. The state education system uses the Khmer language as a medium of instruction in schools, which has invariably disadvantaged the ethnic minority children in terms of accessing education. Moreover, exclusive use of the Khmer language has effectively excluded minorities from gaining membership of Cambodian society on the grounds of who they are, which has also resulted in a waning of the indigenous culture (ICC 2013).

The core approach of the iBCDE programme was to foster deep relationships with the local communities. Based on previous observations, ICC aimed to empower the indigenous



The teaching method is simple as based on introducing one new letter at a time. Students practice writing new words by combining the new letters with syllables they already know.

communities to reflect on and take action in relation to three interrelated parts of their lives. To this end, the three main themes of the iBCDE programme were:

- 1) Culturally Relevant Education (CRE)
- 2) Improved Indigenous Livelihoods
- 3) Community Wellbeing

This review focuses on describing the educational aspect of iBCDE. The programme centred on the Brao, Kreung, Tampuan, Jarai and Bunong-speaking communities, which were relatively remote and not served by other NGOs. The 39 target communities were selected for the programme according to their willingness to participate. Central to the programme are dialogue teams formed in close collaboration with ICC's target villages. The role of these teams is to work intensively with local people, adopting a gentle approach, to explore their needs and real problems and to help them prepare plans for resolving their problems and restoring relationships (ICC 2014).

## 5.2 Culturally Relevant Education (CRE)

The Ratanakiri and Moldulkiri regions have had very low literacy rates, low school enrollments, and high dropout rates. Indigenous peoples in these regions have been deprived of the right to learn in their mother tongue, and of the concomitant cultural methods of teaching and learning (Felm 2013). The aim of Culturally Relevant Education (CRE) is for indigenous people and their communities to understand the purpose of education and for them to take ownership of education in their village. iBCDE applies a rights-based approach, with specific emphasis on the right to participate. The programme is based on the assumption that indigenous people are motivated, committed, and have ownership of the projects, which are built according to their own plans (ICC 2013).

The iBCDE programme has opened and supported MTB MLE literacy classes, which are held by local community members. The key CRE actors are local volunteer teachers who are chosen by the village community. The preferred teachers originate from the indigenous target group, speak the indigenous language, and are familiar with the culture. The MTB MLE classes are held in the evenings because local teachers perform daily work in cultivating their fields. However, the local community members contribute to local teachers' efforts by helping them in the fields or in other ways.

Local teachers are crucial to the success of the endeavour as they apply effective MTB MLE methodology whereby learning experiences in the classroom are connected to indigenous children's experiences and daily life, and which celebrates the value of their own culture. In addition, local people have high confidence in the teacher when he or she is from their own community. The level of education is not very high among teachers because it is so difficult to find indigenous people who can read and write in both the learners' mother tongue and Khmer. On the other hand, an important aspect of iBCDE is the volunteer teachers' own capacity-building through teacher-training courses.

The literacy classes have received technical assistance from local community members, who have formed various language committees that have had an important role in the production of teaching and learning resources for the classes. They have also regularly contributed their knowledge and understanding to community activities such as editing and improving local books and documents, conducting research into the traditional culture, and collating the findings (ICC 2016).

MTB MLE classes have used a "decentralized" school calendar compatible with local farming seasons, which takes into account the indigenous culture and the indigenous peoples' ability to attend classes, particularly when it comes to adults. Most of the ICC's classes were held during the evenings when daily chores in the fields had been completed. The learning materials were also drawn from indigenous culture and traditions, which worked in two ways. Firstly, learning was easier for the children when the topics were familiar and reflected their indigenous culture. For example, songs used at school as learning techniques were selected according to harvest season activities. Secondly, oral traditions predominated, which served to strengthen and preserve the indigenous cultures. Through the iBCDE classes, children have become actively engaged in class because teachers use their mother tongue and the children can relate new information to what they are already familiar with (Felm 2013).



## 5.3 Achievements

ICC has been a pioneer agency in northeast Cambodia when it comes to implementing MTB MLE. The government's current, relatively positive stance towards the issue is to a large extent the result of ICC's advocacy and capacity-building. According to ICC's Country Report (2016), the Cambodian government has taken increasing responsibility for multilingual education for indigenous children. The indigenous people in Ratanakiri have acquired better information and understanding about the importance of education, hygiene and sanitation, the environment, and human rights, which has had a positive impact on their life skills (ICC 2016: 3). Furthermore, according to Kosonen (2017), Cambodia now serves as a role model for its neighbouring countries in implementing bilingual programmes.

Provincial officials have become increasingly involved in the whole development process of the iBCDE programme. They regularly conduct meetings to develop annual development plans for the province, which include all the work plans of NGOs and provincial government departments. Cambodia's Ministry of Education Youth & Sport (MoEYS), together with provincial and district education authorities, has continued to reform the education system in Cambodia. MoEYS has issued a statement transferring responsibility for primary and non-formal education from the Provincial Office of Education to the local City/District Education Office. The government has also implemented the 2015–2018 Multilingual Education National Action Plan (ICC 2016).

In addition to the political change in Cambodia's education policies, these initiatives have also strengthened indigenous peoples' cultural identity. It has also been important to correct preconceptions and misconceptions towards indigenous children and their ability to learn. It was not uncommon in the past for indigenous people to be seen as academically incapable, or inferior to Khmer people (ICC 2013). The Cambodian government has made significant progress in recognizing the indigenous minority people, and adjusting development policies to meet their needs. At the community level, local people have gained a sense of ownership over the education facilities in their village, which they now see as a celebration of their culture, and as a bridge into new areas of knowledge. Community members have realized their inherent value as people, and the many qualities of their unique culture. They are aware of their right to self-determination and are seeking to adapt their culture in order to survive in the changing environment (ICC 2016).

The success of MTB MLE programmes in Cambodia, which have galvanized the interest of Cambodia's government to make the transition towards multilingual national policies, lies in the fact that many bilingual literacy programmes have been undertaken in Cambodia since the mid-1990s by a number of stakeholders including ICC, CARE and UNICEF. Their multilingual programmes have produced extensive linguistic materials in indigenous languages and raised awareness about indigenous peoples' right to their own language and culture. According to Benson (2011), the role of ICC and other partners has facilitated the structural and policy-level dialogue required to bring bilingual education to fruition at the government level. Partner organizations have also worked with sustainability in mind and created ownership on the part of indigenous communities.

## 6. KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The reviewed Finnish-supported MTB MLE programmes among linguistic minorities have attained significant value and exerted a positive effect on linguistic minorities' right to receive education in their mother tongue. By the same token, they have had a beneficial influence on target countries' education policies and practices. All of the recommendations based on this review are summarized on page 10.

The review confirms that policies and practices in inclusive education should continue to nurture multilingualism among linguistic minorities through MTB MLE education. This also includes sign languages. In addition, MTB MLE work should entail all children having the right to quality education in their mother tongue, not only linguistic minorities.

MTB MLE programmes have had a positive effect on education policies and practices, and provide a basis for continuous change. They have succeeded in changing the attitudes of government officials, teachers, parents and students alike. Moreover, they have had a significant impact on changing the legislation and the stated educational policies of partner countries. When children are taught in their mother tongue, they build a strong foundation for learning other languages as well. MTB MLE has yielded multiple positive results and has had a long-term impact on efficiently reducing inequality in education. Children simply learn more effectively and achieve more academically when they can learn in their own mother tongue. The interaction between teachers and students has improved, and teachers have been more inclined to use active learning methods. MTB MLE also strengthens linguistic minorities' cultural identity and raises their profile in their society, where they often face discrimination.

However, attention needs to be paid to supporting those MTB MLE models that are most effective when it comes to achieving these goals. In practice, many variations of MTB MLE exist. According to research, children need to learn in their mother tongue as long as possible, preferably throughout primary school. Therefore, different MTB MLE programmes should solidify their goals in order to achieve quality education for linguistic minorities. Moreover, Deaf people's right to use sign languages should be classified under the broad category of inclusive education, otherwise they will not have access to learning in sign languages. Indeed, Deaf people should be seen as a linguistic minority when planning and supporting MTB MLE programmes. Structural elements such as quality MTB MLE teacher training and the production of learning materials in minority languages are an important aspect of all MTB MLE programmes. Special attention also needs to be paid to these issues after implementing programmes, as the lack of resources for training teachers or publishing literature and learning materials in minority languages can often jeopardize otherwise successful programmes.

Emphasis should also be placed on awareness-raising about the benefits of MTB MLE, as misunderstandings and misrepresentations abound when it comes to the role of the mother tongue in education; these are often used as an argument against multilingual education. Multilingualism is a highly sensitive issue, and in many countries in Africa and Asia policy-

makers suspect that the use of local languages in education may result in excessive ethnization, which may in turn lead to conflict and ultimately divide nations.

Furthermore, parents may resist MTB MLE for different reasons; these are commonly based on a lack of knowledge of the benefits of studying in the mother tongue. Therefore this review suggests that MFA support should focus on advocacy work and awareness-raising on MTB MLE at local, state, national and international levels. Moreover, stakeholders should participate in alliances and networks that support MTB MLE worldwide, where funding agencies and other stakeholders can share ideas and experiences and seek synergy on this issue.

Finally, languages used in formal education are ultimately a political decision, engendering a number of challenges. The most important requirement is for the political climate to become favourably disposed towards multilingual education and for national governments to recognize that multilingualism is not a threat, but a resource. In this regard, greater attention should be paid to advocating MTB MLE at the legislative level, thereby ensuring that the coverage of primary education in the mother tongue is highlighted as an indicator of a better education. It must also be acknowledged that linguistic transformations in education take time, and their impact is often visible only after many years. Sustainable results require significant political commitment from the local government and the development of administrative and technical capacities throughout the education system.



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## ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Toimeksianto: Kartoitus Suomen rahoittamasta työstä kielivähemmistöjen kielioikeuksien ja äidinkielen opetuksen toteutumiseksi

Suomen Lähetysseura tekee työtä kielivähemmistöjen oikeuksien parantamiseksi ja äidinkielen opetuksen edistämiseksi eri puolilla maailmaa. Osana oman työnsä kehittämistä Suomen Lähetysseura haluaa selvittää, miten Suomen valtion rahoittama kehitysyhteistyö edistää kielivähemmistöjen oikeuksien toteutumista ja opiskelua omalla äidinkielellä. Etsimme konsulttia toteuttamaan kartoituksen, joka tukee Lähetysseuran Suomessa ja kansainvälisesti tehtävää vaikuttamistyötä.

Kartoituksen tavoitteena on:

- 1) selvittää ja kuvata, millainen rooli kielioikeuksilla on Suomen rahoittamassa kehitysyhteistyössä järjestösektorilla, kahdenvälisessä kehitysyhteistyössä (mm. opetussektorin bi-hankkeet ja avunsaajamaiden kanssa käydyt kahdenväliset neuvottelut) sekä monenkeskisessä kehitysyhteistyössä ja kehityspoliittisessa työssä (mm. YK, EU, YK- järjestöt ja Universal Periodic Review'n kaltaiset prosessit)
- 2) toimia vertailukohtana ja apuvälineenä, jonka avulla laaditaan tavoitteet ja indikaattorit tulevalle äidinkielistä opetusta edistävälle vaikuttamistyölle ja vaikuttamistyön hankesuunnittelulle
- 3) toimia vertailukohtana politiikka- analyyseille ja - seurannalle ja vaikuttamistyön tulosten arvioinnille.

Kartoituksen tulee sisältää:

- käsitteenmäärittely
- kokonaiskuva Suomen rahoittamissa käynnissä olevista äidinkielistä opetusta ja vähemmistökieliliikkeitä edistävästä hankkeista ja niiden saavutuksista ja suosituksista mukaan lukien kurojen parissa tehtävät viittomakielen opetuksen ja viittomakielen opetuksen hankkeet
- kooste Suomen vaikuttamistyöstä kielivähemmistöoikeuksien ja äidinkielen opetuksen edistämiseksi UPR- prosesseissa
- yksi tai useampi tapausesimerkki Suomen tukemasta äidinkielen opetuksen hankkeesta. Tapausesimerkkiin toivotaan kyseisen kontekstin kuvausta sekä hankkeesta nousevia suosituksia.

Kartoitustoimeksianto toteutetaan mm. dokumenttianalyysillä ja haastattelemalla avainhenkilöitä. Työn suorittajaksi valitaan yksi henkilö tai konsulttiryhmä, jolla on aikaisempaa kokemusta kielivähemmistöjen oikeuksien edistämisestä, kehitysyhteistyöstä tai opetusalaalta. Globaalien kehityskysymysten tuntemus, tutkimuskokemus, opinnot alalta, alan toimijoiden tuntemus sekä kehitysmaakokemus lasketaan hakijan eduksi.

Toimeksianto toteutetaan 16.12.2016–31.1.2017 välisenä aikana.

Työn suorittamisesta kiinnostuneiden tulee toimittaa vapaamuotoinen tarjous 12.12.2016 klo.12 mennessä Tytti Matsiselle sähköpostitse [tytti.matsinen@felm.org](mailto:tytti.matsinen@felm.org). Tarjouksen tulee sisältää lyhyet perustelut miksi hakija tulisi valita tehtävään, sekä kuvaus aikaisemmasta soveltuvasta kokemuksesta ja opinnoista.

Lisätietoa toimeksiannosta: Ihmisoikeusasiantuntija Tytti Matsinen, puh. 040 660 1229

## ANNEX 2: INTERVIEWEES

**Holsmtröm, Emma**, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

**Ilomäki, Markus**, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

**Korpivaara, Leena**, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

**Koskinen, Arja**, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

**Kosonen, Kimmo**, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

**Vitikainen, Ari**, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

**Lahtinen, Inkeri**, Finnish Association of the Deaf

**Vyyryläinen Inkeri**, Finnish Deaf Mission